

THE ENIGMATIC CHARLOTTE GAINSBORG
She's not just her father's daughter
THE EYE

SUZANNE MOORE ON THE FINAL TABOO
Should we show death on TV?
COMMENT, PAGE 23

WHY NIKE IS LOSING THE RACE
Sports fashion runs into trouble
NEWS, PAGE 3

IS THE KING OF VIOLENCE GOING SOFT?
Ryan Gilby reviews the new Tarantino
THE EYE

THE INDEPENDENT

Friday 20 March 1998 45p (R50p) No 3,563

Newspaper of the Year for photographs

Rebuke for Blair over Ecclestone free trip

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

TONY BLAIR was formally censured by an all-party Commons committee yesterday for not registering a family visit to the British Grand Prix, at Silverstone, in July 1996.

The verdict from the Commons Committee on Standards and Privileges, that the visit should have been declared by the Register of Members' Interests, revived Labour embarrassment over last year's Formula One affair.

The Conservatives immediately condemned Mr Blair's "ranked hypocrisy", and demanded an apology from the Prime Minister in the Chamber of the Commons; a form of parliamentary punishment by order that had not been proposed by the Standards and Privileges Committee.

But some senior MPs - Tony as well as Labour - last night turned on the committee, saying they would now feel compelled to register anything and everything, no matter how minor. One Labour critic said: "The whole machinery of Nolan was set up to catch rogues and rascals - not this tat and trivia."

But the committee issued a

further warning to all ministers and MPs. "This is not the first case of its kind," it reported, "and we draw the attention of the House to the importance of registering, or seeking the Registrar's advice, in any case where there may be any doubt."

Mr Blair told the committee that he had not registered the Silverstone trip because he had gone "as part of my duties as leader of the Labour Party, not as an opportunity to watch motor-racing - hence my departure soon after the start of the race".

However, it was conceded yesterday by Mr Blair's official spokesman that during the visit, he had met Formula One's Bernie Ecclestone, who was later to make a donation of £1m to Labour - leading to last year's controversy over government policy on tobacco sponsorship of the sport.

The judgement of Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, who acts as Westminster's special investigator, was that the visit should have been registered, and the committee unanimously upheld his view. "The rules applying at the time," Sir Gordon said, "required the registration of any hospitality exceeding £215 in value given to

a Member or a Member's spouse, which in any way related to membership of the House."

Andrew Robathan, the Conservative complainant, said the "cost" of the hospitality would have come to £600 for Mr and Mrs Blair. Sir Gordon upheld that view - "a value of over £300 per head" - adding that six other MPs who had been at Silverstone on the same day had registered the perk.

Sir Gordon said in his report that while there was "undoubtedly some confusion" over the principle of visits undertaken in an official capacity, Mr Blair was "mistaken".

The Prime Minister's official spokesman suggested the absurdity of the latest position, saying: "Every time William Hague goes to an agricultural show, does he have to declare the fact that it would have cost him £60 and, if he took his wife, £120?"

For the Tories, Francis Maude said: "Tony Blair is caught in a trap of his own making. While sermonising about the need for all politicians to comply with the rules both in letter and in spirit, he was breaking the rules himself. It is the ranked hypocrisy..."

Leading article, page 22

Never mind the Man in the Iron Mask, Leonardo was here



Scream: Fans waiting in Leicester Square for Leonardo DiCaprio - attending his latest film's London premiere last night. Photograph: Kalpesh Lathigra

Willey lied, says her friend

By David Usborne

THE credibility of Kathleen Willey, the latest accuser in the Clinton sex saga, wilted yesterday when a friend said she had lied about the alleged incident - on Willey's urging.

Julie Hatt Steele said in an affidavit that Ms Willey had contacted her last spring and asked her to lie to a reporter from Newsweek magazine, Michael Isikoff, who was pursuing the story.

More specifically, Ms Steele said she was supposed to tell Mr Isikoff how Ms Willey had seen her on the day of the purported

encounter in November 1993 and how, in a state of great distress, she had related being groped and fondled by the President.

Yesterday's twist was an unexpected bonus for the White House which has done its own work to undermine Ms Willey, notably by releasing serial admiring letters sent by her to the President.

In an appearance on television last Sunday night, Ms Willey propelled the scraggy affair into a new orbit with claims that the President imposed himself upon her outside the Oval Office, touched her breasts and asked her to feel his genitals.

The Steele revelation came in an affidavit given to lawyers in the Paula Jones sexual harassment case. It seems that she did indeed lie to Mr Isikoff when first interviewed by him but she withdrew what she said before Newsweek ran the story.

In the statement, Ms Steele said: "I told Ms Willey that I could not make such statements because she had not come to my house that day and had never told me of any sexual advances made by President Clinton."

"She [Willey] repeatedly assured me that any discussion with Mr. Isikoff would be 'off the record' and that it would be

all right if I lied to him. She told me she needed me to do this for her."

Further damaging Ms Willey's case, a supermarket tabloid said yesterday it had been approached by a lawyer trying to sell her story for \$300,000 (£184,000). Phil Burton, the editor of Star magazine, said talks broke off because he offered only \$50,000.

"We've been trying to persuade Kathleen Willey to talk to us for about six months now, and basically some time in the last month Mr Gecker [the lawyer] said she might talk for \$300,000," Mr Burton said.



Kathleen Willey. Credibility undermined by Julie Steele

Elton John asked by Sotheby's to return stolen sculpture

By Steve Boggan

ELTON JOHN has been asked to return a piece of an ancient Roman sarcophagus which he bought at auction following the discovery that it had been stolen.

Sir Elton bought the piece at Sotheby's in London four years ago for about £8,000 believing its provenance to be completely sound.

However, late last year the auction house contacted him to ask for the piece back when it emerged that the sale may not have been lawful. There is no suggestion that either party knew there was a problem with the piece, but the deed for its

return has resulted in Sotheby's conducting a world-wide search to find a replacement for him.

The singer bought the antiquity at auction on 8 December 1994. It is described in the sale catalogue as Lot 133: "A fragment from a Roman marble sarcophagus, circa 3rd-century AD."

A brief description continues: "With the figure of a horseman, a slain figure below, another figure on the corner, the scene would appear to represent an Amazonomachy [an Amazon battle]."

Measuring 59cm by 35.9cm (23 and a quarter ins by 14 and one-eighth ins), the catalogue estimated its value at between £6,000-£8,000.

It is understood that Sir Elton, a great collector of fine art, still displays the fragment in the drawing room of his home in Old Windsor and regards it as one of his favourite pieces. His representatives are co-operat-



The sarcophagus fragment Sir Elton will have to return

ing fully with Sotheby's officials who, in turn, are searching for a similar piece.

One dealer said a full refund had been offered by Sotheby's, but it was turned down in the hope that a similarly fine piece

could be found elsewhere. "He got more pleasure from the artefact than he ever could from the return of the money," said the dealer.

"The worst part about it was that last year was a terrible one for Sir Elton, with the loss of his friends Princess Diana and Gianni Versace. The last thing he needed was to have something else taken away from him."

Chris Proudlove, a spokesman for Sotheby's confirmed the fragment had been stolen. "It will be returned to its owner when a replacement can be found," he said. "We are working with Elton John's organisation to find a replacement as soon as possible."

Mr Proudlove declined to give details of the sale price, or a fuller description of the piece on the grounds of client confidentiality.

It is not known from whom the piece was stolen.

Today's news

Bell reunion
Martin Bell MP was yesterday reunited with his stepdaughter, a former prostitute and export star whom he has not seen for nine years. Page 5

Censorship fight
A university vice chancellor will tell colleagues today that he intends to place the university in conflict with the police in his fight against censorship. Page 3

Scrubs warning
An independent watchdog group has warned they were "seriously concerned" that "a few unrestrained officers" at Wormwood Scrubs may be abusing inmates. Page 2

Budget patience
Tony Blair made a plea for patience yesterday, when he and Gordon Brown met 250 people for a post-Budget question-and-answer session. Page 9

Beaver returns
The beaver could be returning to Scotland after being absent from the British Isles for more than 400 years. Page 13

Church drops stake in genetics company

By Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

The Church Commissioners have disposed of a £1.3m shareholding in a leading genetic engineering firm after protests that the investment was incompatible with Christian values. But they will still invest in an oil company accused of employing forced labour in Burma and two other genetic-engineering firms and an arms manufacturer.

A spokesman for the commissioners said the decision to pull out of Monsanto was made purely on investment grounds, even though its shares had risen in the past two years. The company confirmed it had been asked to justify its activities after questions from MPs. Norman Baker, Liberal Democrat MP for Lewes, complained that the Church's investment policy was not as ethical as it maintained. But a spokesman denied it had bowed to Mr Baker's argu-

ments over Monsanto, an American firm. "We no longer invest in Monsanto because we have changed our investment management arrangements. It is not for ethical reasons."

Colin Merritt, technical manager for Monsanto UK, said that after Mr Baker's protest in July the company had been asked to explain its activities. Having heard it engineered soya beans and potatoes but not humans or animals, the commissioners were satisfied their investment was ethical, he said. However, the decision to divest had been made shortly afterwards on financial grounds.

"Not being a financial expert I am not sure what those reasons were. We have grown considerably in terms of share value over the last couple of years, and we are of course a growth company in the longer term," he said. Mr Baker welcomed the decision. "Investment in Monsanto is incompatible with the Christian doctrine. I am delighted the

Church Commissioners have pulled out, even if they have moved in rather mysterious ways."

Despite the decision, MPs will continue to question the church's investment policy. Yesterday the commissioners' spokesman confirmed it was keeping an investment of almost £1m in Total Oil, despite the Methodists' decision to scrap a £300,000 holding in the firm because of its involvement in Burma. Many Western companies have taken the view that it is impossible to do business there without supporting the military government.

The commissioners promised to look into the issue, but yesterday their spokesman said they were satisfied by the company's assurance that it had a common policy for the treatment of all its employees. An independent report had recently said the firm had not employed forced labour, he added.

INSIDE GUIDE: WEATHER, P2 • CROSSWORDS, P32 AND EYE P10 • TODAY'S TELEVISION, EYE P12 • FULL CONTENTS, P2

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IN TOMORROW'S 5-SECTION
INDEPENDENT

■ Paris tales of the riverbanks: 48 hours on the Seine **TIME OFF**

■ Gordon Brown: Iron laddie comes up trumps for savers **YOUR MONEY**

■ Thirsty work: Why our rivers are dying **THE MAGAZINE**

■ Tom Wilkinson, star of *The Full Monty*, bares all **THE EYE**



IN THE
INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

■ Five star proprietors: The men making hotels hot again

CONTENTS

Home News	2-13	Shares	27
Foreign	14-18	Unit Trusts	28
Features	19-20	Sport	29-32
Obituaries	21	Crosswords	32
Leaders & Letters	22	The Eye, 10	
Comment	23	TV & Radio	The Eye, 11 & 12
Business & City	24-26		



Recycled paper made up 41.4% of the raw material for UK new papers in the first half of 1997.

Scrubs staff admit beatings go on

By Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

AN INDEPENDENT watchdog group warned yesterday that they were "seriously concerned" that "a few unrestrained officers" at Wormwood Scrubs - the jail at the centre of allegations of staff brutality - may be abusing inmates.

A report by the Board of Visitors at the west London jail also said that prison chaplains had passed on allegations of beatings and staff had privately admitted "it goes on".

As it became clear last night the warnings were given to the Prison Service three weeks ago, a new governor, Stephen Moore, currently in charge of Albany Prison on the Isle of Wight, was drafted in to head Wormwood Scrubs.

It emerged that it took a separate set of allegations - that about 20 officers had systematically beaten at least eight inmates at the prison - for an inquiry to be set up. The investigation into the claims began yesterday as officers at the jail walked out in protest at a "lack of support" from management in dealing with the allegations.

It is also understood that Sir David Ramsbottom, the Chief Inspector of Prisons, privately described the jail as "appalling" after members of his inspectorate carried out a visit about two months ago.

The growing number of complaints and allegations against the jail's regime is rapidly turning the situation into a major issue for the Prison Service and ministers.

The early publication of the Board of Visitors' annual report yesterday added fuel to the controversy. It said a "principal area of concern is inmate allegations of abuse by officers".

It added: "We are seriously concerned at the possibility of a few unrestrained officers tainting the reputation of the majority of decent, dedicated staff."

"Some names [of officers] crop up regularly in these alle-

gations and some staff have privately acknowledged to us that 'it goes on'."

The visitors said that although the complaints have been examined and none was upheld, there remained doubts that it was a "whitewash".

The segregation unit, which can house up to 14 inmates who are usually sent there for being violent or disruptive, was singled out for criticism. The report said that inmates believed it was "a place where force is illicitly and habitually used" and prisoners alleged that strip searches were "carried out routinely".

The report was sent to the Prison Service on 25 February. Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, was shown a copy only yesterday. Board of Visitors reports are usually held for a month before they are published.

Further criticism of the "Scrubs", which holds about 1,400 remand and sentenced offenders, is contained in a recent letter to Stephen Shaw, director of the Prison Reform Trust. *The Independent* understands that Sir David said he was receiving "more and more complaints" about conditions at the jail and a short visit their by the inspectorate at the turn of the year "confirms many of the complaints we are receiving".

Mr Moore is to take up his new post in 10 days. Wormwood Scrubs has been without a governor since November.

Yesterday morning the jail's acting governor, Michael Gordon, was faced with a protest meeting of 200 of the 700 staff outside the prison gate.

The Prison Officers' Association said the claims, which were presenting a dossier by a firm of solicitors, were "absolutely shameful".

Branch secretary Duncan Keys said: "As far as we can ascertain they are based on supposition, innuendo, myth, everything in fact except fact."

"There is no evidence, no medical evidence that would support any of their allegations."



Ship-shape: Lt Suzanne Moore, 26, of HMS Dasher in Portsmouth, shattered centuries of tradition when they became the first women to take command of Royal Navy warships, as was revealed in *The Independent* last month. Photograph: Chris Bacon

Irvine pleads artistic licence

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

THE LORD Chancellor said last night that it was better to have fine works of art on his walls than have them "languishing in cellars" when he threw open the doors of his grace-and-favour apartment in the Lords for the first time since its controversial £650,000 refurbishment.

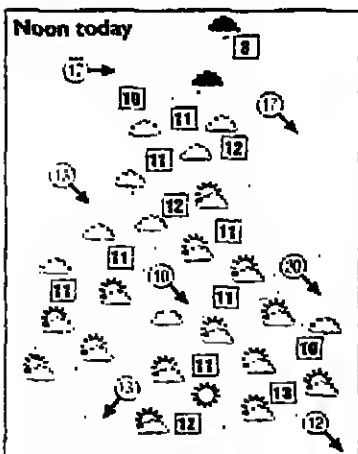
Welcoming around 100 guests from the Womankind Worldwide charity to the River Room, Lord Irvine said: "I'm not going to ask you what you think about it. Someone once said you have to suffer for your art - and it is not even my art! I hope you will agree with the trustees of the lending museums that it is better for these beautiful pictures and sculptures to be here - available for people to see - rather than languishing in cellars where no one can enjoy them."

The guests getting a preview before the work is finished and officially opened to media scrutiny next month were attending a £35-a-head fundraising reception hosted by Lord Irvine for the charity. It was being held to celebrate women's achievements in the legal profession, and those invited include Cherie Booth QC, the Prime Minister's wife, who, as an assistant recorder in county courts, is on the first rung of the ladder to becoming a judge.

The charity helps women in Third World countries fight poverty and oppression and the event, which will be followed by other openings for invited groups, also launched the charity's Civil Literacy for Women campaign to educate women about their legal rights.

As Britain's senior law officer, Lord Irvine told his guests he would do all he could to give women lawyers a fair chance to become judges. He said women should be proud of what they had achieved in the legal profession "against the odds". But he added: "We must do more to break down the barriers women still face as lawyers to joining the legal profession, and barriers to making progress within it... My duty is to ensure we are not deprived of their talent by creating the conditions in which ambitious women can make their mark."

WEATHER



The Northern Isles will be the only part of the UK to see dry rain at noon on Friday. However there will be a little drizzle at times along western coasts of Scotland and possibly along the north coast of Northern Ireland. Most other parts will have a dry day with any early mist and fog in parts of central and southern England quickly clearing. There will also be some decent sunny breaks but North Sea coasts in East Anglia will have a lot of cloud to spoil things.

Outlook for the next few days
Little change, with high pressure dominating and keeping the weather settled. Most places will see spells of sunshine after early morning mist or fog patches. However, the east coast will be cloudier, and the north and north-west of Scotland may have some more drizzle. This situation will remain through the weekend, but on Monday the settled weather will break down with rain moving into Scotland and Northern Ireland.

British Isles weather

Most recent available figures at noon local time.
C: cloudy; O: clear; F: fair; P: fog; H: haze; M: mist; R: rain; S: sunny; S: shower; Sh: shower; Sn: snow; Th: thunder.

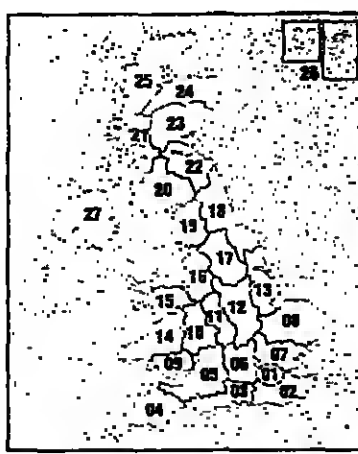
Aberdeen	4-10	Inverness	4-10
Angusley	4-10	Isle of Skye	11-14
Ayr	4-10	Jersey	11-12
Belfast	11-12	Liverpool	4-10
Birmingham	11-12	Manchester	11-12
Blackpool	11-12	Newcastle	4-10
Bournemouth	11-12	Nottingham	11-12
Cardiff	11-12	Sheffield	11-12
Carlisle	4-10	Southampton	11-12
Cork	11-12	Stirling	11-12
Dover	4-10	Stroud	11-12
Edinburgh	11-12	Sunderland	11-12
Exeter	4-10	Torquay	11-12
Gloucester	4-10	Walsley	11-12
Harrogate	4-10	Warrington	11-12
Hull	4-10	Widnes	11-12
Leamington	4-10	Worcester	11-12
Leeds	4-10	York	11-12

Air quality

Yesterday's readings

Location	NO ₂	SO ₂
London	Mod	Good
S. England	Mod	Good
Wales	Mod	Good
C. England	Mod	Good
N. England	Mod	Good
Scotland	Mod	Good
N. Ireland	Mod	Good

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INDEPENDENT Weatherline
For the latest forecasts dial 0891 5005 followed by the two digits for your area indicated by the above map. Source: The Met Office. Calls charged at 50p per min at all times (inc VAT).

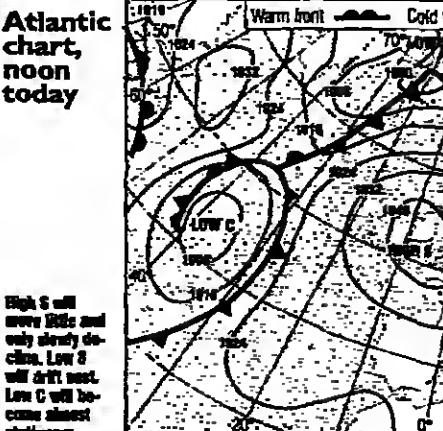
Location	AM	HT	PM	HT
London	05:45	6.4	18:07	6.4
Liverpool	02:57	8.1	15:19	7.9
Aberdeen	10:53	10.8	23:11	10.5
Hull (Albert Dock)	10:17	7.5	22:42	7.4
Greenock	04:26	2.9	16:37	2.9
Dun Laoghaire	03:47	3.4	16:29	3.4

Height measured in metres

World weather

Most recent available figures at noon local time

Location	C	F	W	W
Amsterdam	12	54	Cloudy	
Antwerp	12	54	Cloudy	
Berlin	12	54	Cloudy	
Brussels	12	54	Cloudy	
Copenhagen	12	54	Cloudy	
Dublin	12	54	Cloudy	
Frankfurt	12	54	Cloudy	
Hamburg	12	54	Cloudy	
Heidelberg	12	54	Cloudy	
Kiel	12	54	Cloudy	
Leipzig	12	54	Cloudy	
Lisbon	12	54	Cloudy	
London	12	54	Cloudy	
Madrid	12	54	Cloudy	
Mannheim	12	54	Cloudy	
Munich	12	54	Cloudy	
Nuremberg	12	54	Cloudy	
Paris	12	54	Cloudy	
Rome	12	54	Cloudy	
Stuttgart	12	54	Cloudy	
Vienna	12	54	Cloudy	
Zurich	12	54	Cloudy	



Atlantic chart, noon today

Location	C	F	W	W
Amsterdam	12	54	Cloudy	
Antwerp	12	54	Cloudy	
Berlin	12	54	Cloudy	
Brussels	12	54	Cloudy	
Copenhagen	12	54	Cloudy	
Dublin	12	54	Cloudy	
Frankfurt	12	54	Cloudy	
Hamburg	12	54	Cloudy	
Heidelberg	12	54	Cloudy	
Kiel	12	54	Cloudy	
Leipzig	12	54	Cloudy	
Lisbon	12	54	Cloudy	
London	12	54	Cloudy	
Madrid	12	54	Cloudy	
Mannheim	12	54	Cloudy	
Munich	12	54	Cloudy	
Nuremberg	12	54	Cloudy	
Paris	12	54	Cloudy	
Rome	12	54	Cloudy	
Stuttgart	12	54	Cloudy	
Vienna	12	54	Cloudy	
Zurich	12	54	Cloudy	

WILLIAM HARTSTON WEATHER WISE

"SAY ANYTHING that you like about me," WC Fields insisted, "except that I drink water." Let us hope there are no WC Fields films on television this Sunday, for 22 March is the World Day for Water, as designated by the United Nations General Assembly in 1992. This year, it is being celebrated under the theme "Groundwater: the invisible resource". According to the World Meteorological Organisation, the total volume of water on the globe comprises 97.5 per cent saline and only 2.5 per cent fresh water. Of the groundwater, however, about 45 per cent is fresh, and indeed some 99 per cent of all liquid fresh water resources are, at any given moment, beneath the surface.

Between 1900 and 1995, there was a sixfold increase in global water consumption, while the world population increased only threefold. As surface water supplies run short, the importance of groundwater will increase. Until recently, however, this has been a resource exploited mainly when surface water has already run out.

The main problem is that of sustainable exploitation. Quite apart from identifying the location of this invisible resource, there is the ever-present threat of pollution. Groundwater resources can only be used at a rate at which they can replenish themselves or they will fall victim to what the WMO calls a "chemical time-bomb". Underground water must be one of the earth's greatest under-exploited resources, and it seems certain to develop an ever-increasing importance in mankind's history.

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Irvine pleads artistic licence

By Colin Brown

THE LORD of the Rings, the most famous of the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, has been the subject of a new book, *The Lord of the Rings: The Artistic Licence*, which claims to be the first book to explore the creative process behind the creation of the world of Middle-earth.

While the book is a work of fiction, it is a work of art. It is a work of art because it is a work of imagination. It is a work of art because it is a work of creativity. It is a work of art because it is a work of genius.

The book is a work of art. It is a work of art because it is a work of imagination. It is a work of art because it is a work of creativity. It is a work of art because it is a work of genius.

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'Obscene' book faces university with trial

By David Lister
Arts News Editor

A UNIVERSITY vice-chancellor will tell colleagues today that he intends to place the university in conflict with the police in his fight against censorship.

An emergency meeting of the Senate of the University of Central England in Birmingham will take place today to inform senior staff that the college could be prosecuted under the Obscene Publications Act.

Vice-chancellor Dr Peter Knight was interviewed by police earlier this week over his refusal to destroy the university's copy of *Mapplethorpe*, a book about the controversial American photographer, the late Robert Mapplethorpe.

Dr Knight voluntarily attended an interview with West Midlands Police on Wednesday. He was cautioned and interviewed, and the interview was recorded.

The Crown Prosecution Service has objected to two photographs in the book. Following the police interview, a university spokesman confirmed that Dr Knight did not agree to the request for the destruction of the book.

Mapplethorpe, a copy of which is in the British Library and most college libraries, was seized by police last October. They had been alerted by a chemist who developed photographs of the book taken by a student for a thesis on "Fine Art versus Pornography".

Lawyers acting for the CPS decided parts of it were likely to "deprave or corrupt" under the 1959 Obscene Publications Act and advised the police that they

had grounds to ask the university voluntarily to destroy it.

As well as portraits and studies of flowers, the late Mapplethorpe's work features explicit photographs of his - and other people's - sex lives. His most notorious image is of himself with a whip in his rectum. Other works show men performing homosexual acts. His work has been shown at most major galleries in the Western world, including the Institute of Contemporary Arts, the Hayward Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery in London.

Dr Knight said: "It is clear that there is the real possibility of a prosecution of the university and the publishers... As a result of this serious development I believe it is only proper that I should convene an emergency meeting of the Senate of the University in order to ensure that all colleagues understand and appreciate the seriousness of the situation and the potential drain on university resources that may result from any subsequent trial."

"I have informed the West Midlands Police that the university has 26 other books and catalogues of the works of Robert Mapplethorpe together with one CD-ROM."

Dr Knight also said he had undertaken to give West Midlands Police, via the university's solicitors, a definitive statement in response to the request for the destruction of the book by next Monday.

Susan Sandon, marketing director for the publishers Jonathan Cape, told *The Independent*: "This has been in print since 1992, and we certainly have no plans to withdraw it."



Ennobled: Professor Lord Winston, head of the fertility clinic at the Hammersmith Hospital in west London

Photograph: Adrian Dennis

The brooding faces of a fertility god

FOR A LORD of creation he looks uncommonly gloomy. The thick moustache and hang-dog expression convey infinite sadness. Odd, really, in one who has brought joy to hundreds of couples who have found themselves, in his hands, transformed into parents, writes Jeremy Lawrence.

Now the fertility pioneer Professor Robert Winston, ennobled by Tony Blair but defied by practically everyone else, has turned his attention to the other end of life. As presenter of a new BBC television series *The Human Body*, to be shown in May, he this week defended the decision to allow the cameras to film the last moments of a man dying from inoperable cancer.

In a typically robust piece in Wednesday's *Times* he dismissed critics who fear that the scene may distress the recently bereaved and expressed his "outrage" at "journalists who have tried to sensationalise the decision" to show it on prime-time television.

As a candidate for God's earthly representative, Lord Winston has few equals. He is the moral arbiter of our times - ever ready with an opinion on the latest ethical conundrum and never shy about expressing it.

IN THE NEWS LORD WINSTON

Brilliant, mercurial but also intolerant and arrogant, he has a complex relationship with the media, alternately using and abusing it.

Many times he has made the news himself, as now, by pushing out the ethical boundaries. He has always gone his own way, against received opinion. When it emerged that he was giving fertility treatment to a woman with HIV he was quite prepared to override counter views and was disdainful of the critical public reaction. There has been unease at the Hammersmith Hospital, where he

runs the fertility clinic, about his constant pushing against the limits and his frequent appearances on television. He in turn is frequently irritated by the "bloody bureaucrats who run medicine".

Married with three children, and an orthodox Jew, he speaks often of how much his family means to him and has wondered aloud how he would have coped had he been infertile himself.

He is a libertarian with an authoritarian bent. He has defended treating lesbians - "There is no evidence they would do damage to a child" - and argued on behalf of his HIV-infected patient that she would make an excellent mother.

Television producers love his brooding looks, his deep, reassuring voice and his theatricality - for years he wanted to be an actor, not a doctor. He says he hates talking about himself and loves talking about science. That is why he gives the interviews and makes the films. Sometimes, however, the mask slips and he displays an arrogance bordering on contempt.

He thought the reaction to Dolly, the cloned sheep, with warnings of bizarre animals and Identikit Saddam Husseins, was "ludicrous", and the fuss over designer babies raised by the development of genetic screening ill-informed.

The problem is that he doesn't suffer fools - and next to the professor most people are fools. That makes him a prickly teacher.

The arrogance dates from an early age. At the London hospital where he trained, he was a member of the Failed Pharmacology Club after flunking early exams. He wore the club tie, which bore a Latin inscription "Eight Pints", to a subsequent viva (oral exam) - and was promptly failed. He said later: "Pharmacology is a useless subject. If I want to know a dosage I ask a nurse."

Is he happy? It is hard to tell. He once confessed: "I'm very competitive. Every day is a constant battle to do things better." Maybe that's why he looks so gloomy.

WINSTON ON IN-VITRO FERTILISATION

"I was one of those people who thought IVF was a waste of time... I was wrong." That was in 1978, when Steptoe and Edwards had delivered the world's first test tube baby. By 1980 Winston was convinced that IVF was something Hammersmith hospital should be doing. Now it has one of the largest IVF clinics in Britain.

WINSTON ON THE WOMAN WHO WANTED TO GIVE BIRTH TO HER OWN GRAND-CHILD

Elizabeth Jones, 49, agreed to bear children for her daughter, Suzanne Langston, 20, who was born without a womb. Winston said: "It sounds like rather a brave thing for a mother to do."

WINSTON ON SURROGACY

Initially he was in favour, but later he changed his mind. He said: "I have met a number of mothers who claim not to have been distressed by the experience [of giving up the baby at birth] but who, in fact, have been badly hurt."

WINSTON ON DIANE BLOOD

He read her affidavit on her fight to have her dead husband's baby at 2am and wept. Less than two hours later he was faxing his own opinion in support of her fight to her lawyer. "I thought, God in heaven - how can they do this! This must be wrong."

Sales slump as designer trainers lose footing in fashion stakes

By Kim Sengupta

NOT SO LONG ago they were *de rigueur* for anyone aspiring to street-chic. Designer trainers were statements of style, and Nike one of the most stylish of all. But now the fashion gurus say trainers have had their day, and Nike yesterday revealed a 69 per cent slump in earnings in the final three months of last year.

As a result, the company will cut 1,600 jobs or 7 per cent of its workforce. It says the current woes are largely due to turmoil in the now limping "tiger" economies in the Far East, and an "oversupply" of the product in its largest market, the United States.

Two years ago the company, along with rivals, was accused by Christian Aid of exploiting Third

World workers. The charity also said that trainers were advertised by international athletes like Linford Christie for more than £50 a pair, but the average labour costs of producing them is 46 pence in China and £1.19 in Thailand.

Nike announced, following the criticism, that it would introduce independent monitoring of its factories. Yesterday, it said the cutbacks

would make the company leaner and more competitive.

Industry watchers do not, however, see a quick turnaround for the giant multinational. Diane Daggett of US analysts Dain Rauscher said: "They have got to work through all these issues, primarily inventories and slowing demand."

She did add that an upturn could begin in 1999, but will Nike, and the

other famous brands such as Fila, Adidas, Vans and Converse ever have a market as lucrative as in the past?

Not if the young buyers see their idols abandoning them. The Verve, said to be the coolest band around, wear oot trainers, but Clark's Walabees. And Calvin Klein's models are no longer shod in scruffy trainers but work boots. *The Face* magazine says "smart shoes are the way

to walk this year" and another style mag, *I-D*, stated "flashy silver trainers are being overlooked in favour of rugged, subtly shaded action shoes".

Total sales of sports footwear fell by 3.5 per cent in 1996, compared to a rise of 7.7 per cent the previous year, and according to analysts the market is saturated.

Sociologist Philip Armitage said:

"Fashion is fickle... If trainers are now considered naff by the trend-setters then this will permeate down to the market in general over a course of time."

"Designer trainers are not, of course, going to disappear, but they are likely to stop being seen as compulsory wear. A lot of parents will breathe a sigh of relief at that - until the next fad comes along."

Row over car firms' 'racist, tasteless' ads

By Kate Watson-Smyth

Two of the world's largest car makers yesterday had to withdraw advertisements following complaints that they were insulting and racist. Ford had produced a television commercial for its Escort based on the film *The Full Monty*, featuring a group of male strippers.

But the advert, shown in the North-east, received complaints that it only used white men, whereas the film included a black stripper. Toyota also climbed down after it ran an advert in Australia claiming the Queen was a "British export that's had its day". Devised by Saatchi and Saatchi for a Lexus 4WD car, it appeared the day after the republican convention

ended last month, but still faces criticism from royalists. It featured the grille of a Range Rover below the words: "Don't worry, Your Majesty, you're not the only British export that's had its day."

Philip Benwell, chairman of the Australian Monarchist League, said: "It is a grave insult." In a letter to the Japanese ambassador, he wrote: "How dare your companies disparage the Sovereign of Australia."

Brian Sheehan, chief executive of Saatchi and Saatchi, initially defended the advert, saying it was intended to be controversial and had received few complaints but yesterday designers at the firm said it had been withdrawn. A Toyota



A frame from the Full Monty-inspired Ford Escort TV advert, criticised for being racist

spokesman said it was a one-off. "It was developed in Australia and intended for use only in that country. Toyota (GB) Ltd do not agree with the style or content and would never have allowed such an advert to run in this country. We are very pleased it is no longer being used."

In similar vein, Ford apologised for its *Full Monty* advert and said it adhered to a strict equal-opportunities policy. However, two years ago it was at the centre of a similar controversy after it was revealed that white faces had been superimposed over black faces in a photograph used for an ad campaign.

In a statement yesterday Ford said: "The advert was not intended to be an exact reproduction of the film and a group of both black and white actors were auditioned and the four most suitable men were chosen. All four happened to be white." It said it was giving the advertising agency, Ogilvy &

Mather, an "extra-special push" in its racial-awareness training schemes, based on Ford's own ethnic-diversity programme. Bill Morris, secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, said: "It would seem neither agency nor client have yet learned society must be reflected in all its diversity... If a black actor was good enough to make *The Full Monty* a runaway success, black people are good enough to help sell the Ford cars which they make."

Hard times forces RSC to make dramatic cuts

THE ROYAL Shakespeare Company is to cancel a national tour and introduce other cuts following smaller-than-hoped audiences at Stratford-upon-Avon and a mounting deficit, writes David Lister.

A current deficit of £1.6m is expected to increase to £2m by April. Although the winter figures for Stratford are up by eight per cent on last year, to an average of 64 per cent, they

are £748,000 below a target set by the company two years ago.

More alarming is that some performances are playing to very low houses. A performance of *Twelfth Night* was only 10 per cent full and one of *The Merchant of Venice* 23 per cent full.

The company will cancel its mid-scale tour, which plays in 800 to 1,000-seat theatres across the country. An internal report, leaked to *The Stage* newspaper,

said: "It is no longer possible to balance our budget without reducing the scale of our work. Basic operations in Stratford and London will have to be secured. Ways have been looked at to re-structure the budgets - some will be frozen, some will be cut."

The report continues: "Unfortunately, there will be no mid-scale tour in 1998, despite the huge success of *Cymbeline* [a recently acclaimed production with Antony Sher]. We are hoping that we can convince funding bodies to correct our funding position to enable us to re-instate this tour in 1999."

The cancellation is a blow for RSC artistic director Adrian Noble, who passionately believes in taking the company around the country, claiming that is the remit of a national company.

A spokesman for the RSC confirmed last night that the mid-

scale tour was being cancelled. He also confirmed the box-office figures, but added that a 64 per cent average "was something most West End theatres would be proud of and we are confident that the average figures for *Twelfth Night* and the *Merchant of Venice* will be healthier by the end of the season."

The company's troubles were due to a standstill grant from the Arts Council, he said.

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Phone codes to change yet again

By Steve Boggan

TELEPHONE dialling codes in six areas of the country are to change again – in some cases for the third time in seven years – because telecommunications operators are running out of new numbers.

Phone users in Coventry, Portsmouth, Southampton, Cardiff and Northern Ireland will be given fresh area codes beginning 02-plus another identifying digit, while people in London will see the abolition of 0171 and 0181 prefixes.

One positive side-effect of the change in the capital will be the end of the snobbery inherent in having inner and outer London numbers. Instead of two codes, Londoners will all have codes beginning 020.

The changes, which will come into force on 22 April 2000, are being introduced because of the sheer demand on new numbers caused by the steady growth of telephone connections and the huge increase in de-

mand for computer connections to the Internet. Added to that is the demand from new telephone services companies which have to be allocated numbers in blocks of 10,000 to pass on to customers.

Peter Clark, chairman of the national code and number change (NCNC) steering group, said that the new prefixes would give parents and employers greater control over certain telephone services, such as sex lines. From the date of the changes, adult lines and expensive premium rate numbers will be grouped together under an 0909 prefix.

"As well as giving us more numbers, the changes will group UK codes into clear and understandable families," Mr Clark said. "Businesses are not the only ones affected. Everyone with a fixed telephone line, mobile, computer modem or fax machine needs to understand the changes."

"This is a vital step to take our

phone system into the next century."

PhOneDay, in April 1995, paved the way for the latest changes. By inserting a "1" in every code, the path was opened up for future changes and more prefixes – meaning that 01, 02, 03 and so on can be allocated for different uses. However, there are no guarantees that these changes will last longer than the first decade of the new millennium.

In the capital, where businesses have had repeated changes of numbers – and expensive updating of stationery and letterheads on vans and lorries – the London Chamber of Commerce expressed concern.

"Although business is helping the telecoms industry with these changes, we are concerned that they will be very disruptive," a spokesman said.

"We have known about these changes since January last year, and yet it is only now that we are getting some concrete information about them."



Brighton belle: Charles Hadcock with his 20-tonne cast-iron sculpture, which now rests on the town's beach Photograph: Roger Bamber

Sculptor shapes up on the beach

By John Windsor

BRIGHTON beach will never look the same again. A 5-metre high cast-iron abstract sculpture, titled *Passacaglia*, was yesterday being bolted into the shingle by its sculptor, Charles Hadcock – with the help of a crane and a team of engineers and foundrymen.

It weighs 20 tonnes – only a tenth the weight of Antony Gormley's *Angel of the North*, hoisted on a hill outside Gateshead last month – but hefty enough to satisfy the current civic yearning for monumental modernism.

"It's big, it's brave, it's bold", said Lord Bassam, Brighton's council leader, "and it's very Brighton. Like Brighton, it will definitely have a strong reaction."

Like Brighton? Not quite. Though unmistakably contemporary, Hadcock's design relies on almost-forgotten rules of correct proportion, taken from nature, that were cherished as divine by the ancient Greeks and Romans and guarded as

secrets ever since by shady fraternities. The patterned heads of snailshells, the coils of sea shells – and the façade of the Parthenon – are said to share the same divine geometry.

Does it work? A passer-by, watching Hadcock, 32, a graduate of the Royal College of Art, wielding a spanner, told him: "It's such a pleasing shape, but I don't know why."

"That," Hadcock replied, relishing the moment, "is because it's got sacred geometry."

"It really works," Hadcock said with a grin. "I find that eight out of ten people say they prefer it. People really do know what they like."

Hadcock took his inspiration for the sculpture from the first-century Roman architect Vitruvius. The structure, which is sited opposite Brighton promenade's greasy-spoon cafés and souvenir shops, cost £40,000. It was funded with the help of the National Lottery. It might have amused the ancients to watch holidaymakers, candyfloss in hand, trying to locate the divine in 20 tonnes of cast iron.

Seven years for councillor who set fire to wife

AN accountant was yesterday jailed for seven years after being convicted of pouring petrol over his unfaithful wife and setting her alight.

Warwick Crown Court found Trevor Eames, 55, guilty of causing his wife, Ursula, grievous bodily harm with intent. Judge Richard Bray told Eames, a local councillor, he was guilty of a premeditated terrible deed.

He said: "I am certain the offence was premeditated because your wife dared to leave you, you inflicted a terrible revenge on her. You poured petrol on to her neck then set fire to her. Then you stood by grinning."

"As a result she has suffered the most horrible of injuries which will be with her for the remainder of her life."

Masons to reveal judges

SENIOR judges are understood to have told the United Grand Lodge of Freemasons that they have no objection to the lodge revealing which judges are Masons.

The Judges' Council – chaired by the Lord Chief Justice Lord Bingham and made up of 17 senior judges – met to discuss the question and sent a letter outlining their views to the lodge this morning.

The move comes after the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, said he would write to the lodge – the governing body for the country's 350,000 masons – to ask for a list of Masons in the judiciary and police.

Raid gang boss gets 20 years

A FEARED underworld gang boss dubbed "The Ayatollah" was jailed for 20 years and the mistress he coerced received a three-year sentence yesterday. James Phillips, 47, from Greenwich, south-east London, masterminded "a stream" of armed raids on jewellers and other targets over four years which netted more than £1m, an Old Bailey court was told.

His lover, Christine Clapp-Smith, 48, from Bermondsey, south London, helped him set up two raids on West End jewellery shops. Before one raid, she made up an armed robber to look like a woman so as not to arouse suspicion. But Clapp-Smith was "a terrified robot" in the hands of her violent lover, according to her counsel, Ian Joblin.

Lawyer faces prosecution

A LAWYER is facing professional charges and a police investigation into allegations that he forged divorce decrees. The Law Society of Scotland confirmed it is to prosecute Kenneth Anderson at an independent tribunal which has the power to disbar lawyers. Lothian and Borders Police issued a statement confirming it is also probing the allegations against the lawyer.

Buying pasta – with a twist

TESCO is offering customers a crash course in Italian to save mistakes at the check-out. One shopper asked for Lamborghini instead of linguini, the thin, flat pasta, while another asked for rigor mortis instead of rigatoni, tube shaped pasta. Tesco has drawn up a leaflet spelling out the names phonetically.

Before you go shopping this weekend, check out the Q's.

Q. Is Air Conditioning included?
A. It certainly is.

Q. What about security?
A. How about a really sexy cloth trim interior?

Q. Airbags?
A. Driver's and front passenger's.

Q. Is there a choice of engines?
A. SURE: 1.4, 1.6 PETROL AND 1.9 TURBO DIESEL.

Q. WHAT ABOUT COLOURS? SOMETHING STRIKING...
A. Very, very special.

Q. Do I have to pay extra for alloy wheels?
A. Nope.

Q. Is the steering wheel height adjustable?
A. Absolutely. As are the front seat belts and head restraints.

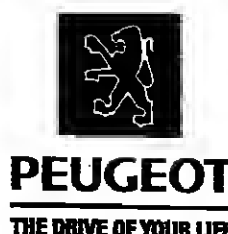
Q. Tinted glass, a possibility?
A. Tinted glass, a certainty.

Q. FINANCE... WHAT'S YOUR BEST?
A. How about 2 Years' 0% Finance?

Q. How about metallic paint?
A. It does have power steering?

Q. How about fog lights?
A. It also like front fog lights, standard, 0% A. OK.

Q. How about Diabla Red?
A. It's also like front fog lights, standard, 0% A. OK.



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صلى الله عليه وسلم



Asian idol

A FRIEND of Pandora's recently returned from an exotic holiday in Cambodia with a tale that should warm Peter Mandelson's heart.

During her tour around the beautiful but backward land, she met many friendly Cambodians but was struck by how little they knew of the rest of the world.

Most had never heard of such Western icons as the Beatles, Elvis or even the Spice Girls. However, while she was walking in the temple gardens at Angkor Wat, she was approached by a pleasant young man who asked where she called home. When she told him that she was from Britain, his face broke into an enormous grin and he said, "Ah, yes, Tony Blair!"

Derry's in demand

POOR Lord Irvine. It seems he is facing a huge tax bill as a result of his selfless flat refurbishment on behalf of future generations.

Since the details of his plans for the Lord Chancellor's apartments became public, a number of clergymen have written cross letters to the newspapers. They have pointed out that the Inland Revenue charged them for benefits in kind when their vicarages were done up. On their behalf, Tory MP Eric Forth put down a question. It was answered by Dawn Primarolo, a Treasury minister, to the effect that government ministers occupying official residences met the statutory conditions for exemption from tax on living accommodation or structural alterations. That seemed clear until she added: "Where improvements to the accommodation consist of repairs, decoration or furniture, tax is charged on a benefit by Section 163 (2) of ICTA to 10 per cent of the taxable ministerial salary and any other benefits."

Wallpaper, mirrors, curtains: sounds like decoration and furniture to me. When Pandora called the Treasury to confirm that this made Lord Irvine liable to a whopping tax, he was told by an Inland Revenue spokesman, "All Dawn Primarolo did was set down the rules. At the Inland Revenue we do not comment on the tax position of any individuals, including Lord Irvine." Derry, better ring your accountant.

Northern exposure



A FRIEND of Pandora's is well acquainted with Lady Aitken, Jonathan's charming mother. When he was arrested on Tuesday, the police were very discreet about which London station was used for his interview in order to keep the pack of journalists from mobbing him on his exit. (As it was, they mobbed him on his home doorstep.) My friend happened to speak to Lady Aitken during the day and casually asked where her son was being grilled. "It's in Fulham," said the good lady. "Although if they really wanted to keep anyone from finding him they ought to have taken him to a station north of the Park." Highgate? Isn't that a wasteland somewhere near Leeds?

Cyber slander

PANDORA wandered over to the Central Office of Information offices in Lambeth earlier this week to watch the BSE hearings and was impressed by the technology.

All official participants were equipped with lap-tops on which they could watch a rolling transcription of the hearings as typed by a recording secretary. However, when the language speeded up, it was obvious that the recorder had to struggle to keep pace. Thus the word "cannibalistic" came on the screen as "cannibal list tick". This gave Pandora a mildly amusing free association - "cannibal lipstick" - until another variant flashed on screen. Professor Richard Lacey had been speaking of how in the past the Ministry of Agriculture had been "pushing a line". The screen transcript rendered this as "pushing a lie".

Shortly thereafter, the chairman of the panel himself began to refer to how the government had been "pushing a lie". Can you sue a computer for libel?

Pandora

DAILY POEM

Entertaining women

By D J Enright

In a night-club in Hiroshima,
A combo playing noisily.
A girl asked sweetly, "Kohi shimaska?"
Should they make coffee?
No, he replied, it kept him awake.
It was "koi", it struck him later, not "koi".
It was love she had offered, not coffee.
The thought kept him awake.

Next day, as a guest of Rotary,
He conveyed (without authority)
Fraternal greetings from Cradley Heath.
Waiting outside was a victim
(Rotary does not entertain women),
A victim for him to see, to see him.
Him with his face still scarlet,
Her with her white scarred arms.

This is our final selection from D J Enright's *Collected Poems 1948-1998* (Oxford University Press, £15). Enright taught English for many years in the Far East and Egypt, and has also worked as a publisher, critic and editor. This poem first appeared in *Instant Chronicles* (1985).

MP meets prostitute stepdaughter



Family reunion: Jessica Sobel arriving to meet her stepfather (right) Photograph: David Dyson

By Kate Watson-Smyth

MARTIN BELL, the former war reporter turned independent MP, was yesterday reunited with his stepdaughter, a former prostitute and porn star whom he has not seen for nine years.

Jessica Sobel, 29, who was flown to London by a national newspaper, met up with her stepfather in a hotel and the pair talked and posed for photographs. But although Mr Bell was happy to see her again, he expressed disquiet that the meeting had been arranged by the *Mirror*.

He knew nothing of his stepdaughter's life until she was tracked down by reporters in the US, and he only discovered that she had worked as a prostitute after her book was published four months ago.

He wrote to her then saying he hoped they could meet up and yesterday they were reunited. Mr Bell said: "It was a very friendly meeting and we spent about two hours together."



and they are looking after her during her stay."

But despite his discomfort about the meeting, Mr Bell said he would stay in touch with his stepdaughter. "She needs all the support she can get at the moment. Her war zones were much more terrible than mine."

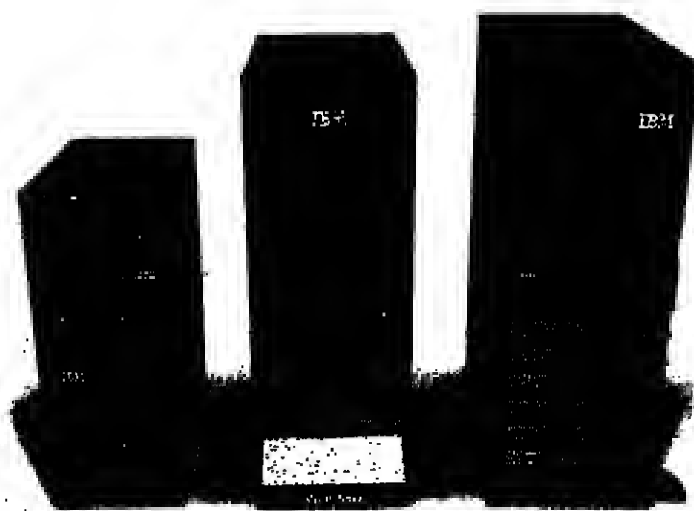
The MP for Tatton was working in Washington and married to his first wife Helene Gordon when he met Miss Sobel's mother, Rebecca, in 1976. They were lovers for eight years and then married for four. But they separated in 1988 and divorced three years later.

After graduating from university, Miss Sobel went to Hollywood and "did just about every despicable thing there is". After a bit part in *Baywatch* she turned to porn movies and later became a nude masseuse and £500-a-night prostitute.

Two years ago, she decided to get her life back on track and wrote a book about her experiences. When it was published, he immediately sent a letter asking her to get in touch.

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HAND-HELD MOBILE PHONES AND DRIVING. IT'S A BAD CALL.

Whitehall urged to seek end to 'cruel' veal trade

By Katherine Butler
in Brussels

ANIMAL welfare campaigners urged the Government to seek a change in EU law last night after losing a legal battle to put a permanent end to shipments of veal calves from Britain.

The European Court found that the British Government would be acting illegally if it imposed a unilateral ban on veal calf exports. The 15 judges rejected a challenge by Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) to the Government's claim that even if it wanted to end live-calf exports, its hands were tied by the rules of the single market.

The defeat was "devastating", Joyce D'Silva of CIWF said. "This shows that free trade is God in the European Union... Free trade is fine for

cabbages and TV sets but it has to be a different matter when animals are suffering".

The outcome will have no practical effect for now because British traders have in any case been banned from shipping cattle abroad under the "mad cow disease" ban imposed on Britain in March 1996. Before the BSE ban more than half a million veal calves were exported each year from Britain to be reared in crates in Holland, Belgium, France and Italy. Public outrage about the cruelty involved led to protests and blockades on British ports in 1995.

But Ms D'Silva said calves would be one of the first categories certified for export as the EU's BSE ban is phased out. The first lifting of the embargo for meat from Northern Irish herds was agreed earlier this week.



One of the veal calves in a 'welfare-rearing' base at the Rosemaund Research Centre near Hereford. Campaigners are fighting for an end to veal calf shipments to the Continent
Photograph: Reuters

She said the onus was on the Government to put the case for a change in the law on the EU agenda immediately. "Labour have said they want a meat trade not a livestock trade in Europe. They are armed with a new declaration in the Amsterdam treaty which recognises that

animals are sentient beings, and they have the EU presidency until July. They could not be in a stronger position".

Labour pledged before coming to power that it would ban the veal-calf export trade if the European Court established that it could be done legally within the confines of the single market. Lawyers for CIWF had argued in the High Court of England and Wales that Britain could invoke a clause in the EU treaty which allows governments to block trade for reasons of public morality, public policy or the health and life

of animals. They argued that because a significant section of public opinion in Britain believed EU rules on veal-calf raising are too weak, Britain should be allowed an exemption.

But the judges, overturning a preliminary opinion by the Court's own Advocate General, said Britain could not impede the calf trade because common EU rules on the minimum standards for the raising of calves in crates already exist.

Pressure from Britain led to inclusion last June of a new EU treaty protocol which obliges Brussels to "pay full regard to the welfare requirements" of animals when implementing market policies. The treaty has not yet been ratified but Ms D'Silva said the ruling flew in the face of the spirit of the protocol. The Court failed to give animal welfare or the concerns of the British public "the time of day" she said.

Shops accused on own-brand cigarettes

By Jeremy Laurence
Medical Editor

SUPERMARKETS were accused yesterday of covertly profiting from the tobacco trade by selling thinly disguised "own brand" cigarettes.

Most major chains sell own-label cigarettes but in nearly all cases their ownership is concealed because supermarkets fear it will harm their image, Dr Martin Jarvis of University College, London claimed.

A study published in the *British Medical Journal* found that own-label cigarettes were on average 20 per cent cheaper than leading brands but had higher nicotine and tar levels. Dr Jarvis, who conducted the research, said the supermarkets were exploiting groups who could least afford to smoke, suffered most from smoking and who most needed to give up.

He said: "With nearly all other products the supermarket's name is prominently displayed on the label. But most of these cigarette packets don't mention the supermarket at all. It's as if they are ashamed of what they are up to. They want to profit from the tobacco trade without associating their names with it."

Retailers' own-brand cigarettes account for half of all the brands marketed in the UK and 7 per cent of all cigarettes sold. On average, they cost £2.48 for a packet of 20, as against the normal selling price of £3.20 for brand leaders.

Own-label cigarettes identified in the study included Bonington at Tesco, Kings Men at

Co-op and Balmoral at Asda. Only Asda's packet carried the store name.

Dr Jarvis, of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund's health behaviour unit, said some stores had transferred ownership of the brand to the manufacturing company in a bid to dissociate themselves from the tobacco industry.

But he said most of the lines were available exclusively through the supermarket outlets and claims that they were not own-label brands were "so-mantics".

Tesco remained adamant, however, that the Bonington range was not an own-label product. A spokesman said the line was launched in 1995 as an own-label product but the policy had been reviewed and ownership of the trademark passed to makers R J Reynolds. They were also on sale at other outlets, he said.

Co-op insisted the lines it sold were "exclusive brands, not own-brand cigarettes". A spokesman said: "We provide them as a service to our customers who smoke. We need to be able to compete against other retailers... In some respects we are caught between the devil and the deep blue sea."

Dr Vivienne Nathanson, head of science and ethics at the British Medical Association, said: "The supermarket chains want to be seen as the friend of the hard-pressed mother, offering wholesome food at reasonable prices... It is quite grotesque that they should be actively engaged in selling these cheap unbranded cigarettes..."

Designers bring style to aids for disabled

WHEELCHAIRS, walking sticks and Zimmer frames should be trendier and better designed so disabled people are proud to be seen with them, a design conference was told yesterday, writes Rosa Prince.

Disabled people complain that because equipment is usually provided by the NHS or social services, it is often clinical, ugly and unwieldy. Many are ashamed to be seen with it. Rather than being treated as a single group, disabled people say they should be targeted as consumers with different needs, opinions and lifestyles.

To help manufacturers meet the challenge of providing equipment for such a disparate group, a CD-ROM called De-

sign Aid was launched yesterday detailing the interests and aspirations of disabled people.

Compiled by Design for Ability at Central St Martin's College in London, the CD-ROM is based on interviews with 600 disabled people and will be used by designers and manufacturers who want to know more about their lives.

To show the type of equipment which could be made using the CD-ROM, the design consultants Tangerine have produced the Active Walking Frame - lightweight, foldaway and partly made of wood. Researchers say disabled people were proud to be seen with it, and it is as cheap to produce as an NHS Zimmer frame.

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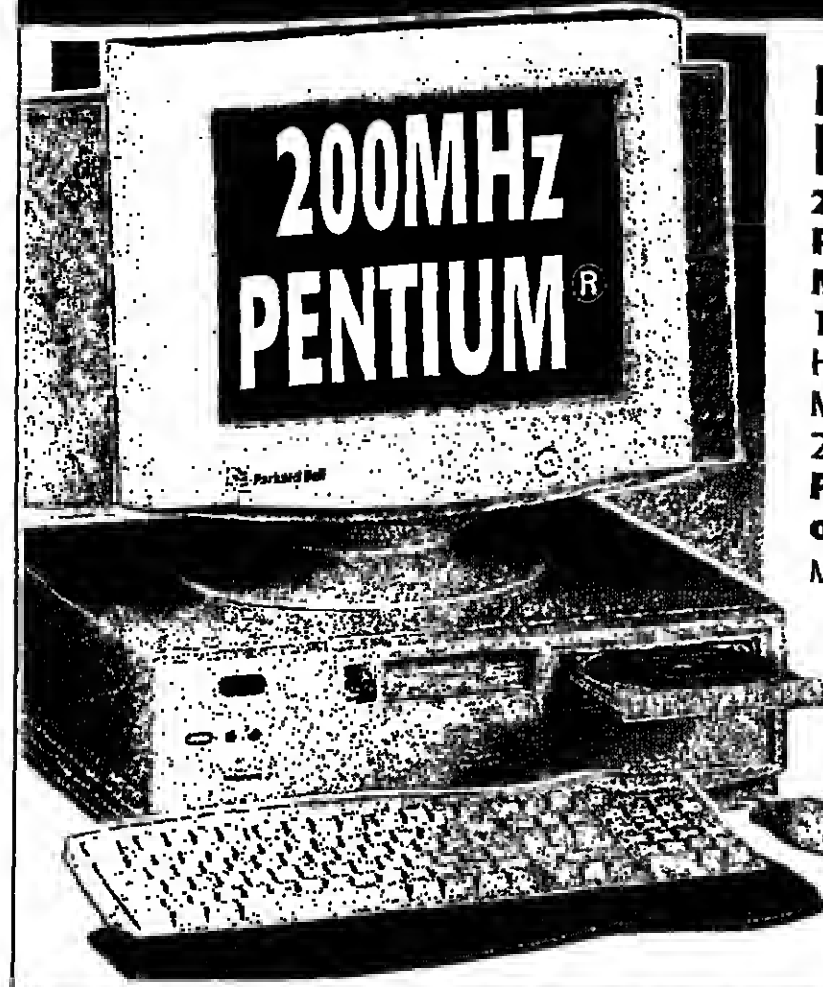
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Blunkett promises to take schools out of the Victorian era

By Ben Russell
Education Correspondent

AN END was declared yesterday to the "scandal" of schools with Victorian outside lavatories.

David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education, announced a £35m package to give all schools "the decent facilities that every school should have".

The money is part of a £90m building programme for schools. It will include £40m to open up new classroom space to help meet the Government's pledges on class sizes and £15m to replace out of date heating systems, a major cause of winter school closures.

Mr Blunkett announced the package in the Commons as he outlined plans for spending the £250m promised for education in Tuesday's Budget.

He said: "We will bring to an end the scandal whereby children in 600 of our schools, most of them primary, still have to go outside in order to use the toilets."

"Tens of thousands of children have to go outside to use facilities which often date back to the Victorian age. That is simply unacceptable in the last years of the 20th century."

"By next year, we will have ended the scandal of outside toilets forever. It will take our schools from the Victorian age into the age of the new millennium."

Mr Blunkett said the money was in addition to the £1.3bn promised over the lifetime of the Parliament to tackle repairs in schools.

He said: "This extra funding will help us to deliver our core pledge on class sizes. Doing so will help us to meet our demanding literacy and numeracy targets."

But Liberal Democrat education spokesman Don Foster



In from the cold: Schools are to get £35m for 'decent facilities' Photograph: Hulton Getty

said inflation forecasts would wipe out any chance of real improvements in school funding. He said: "The Government is right to allocate £35m to deal with the legacy of the previous government which forced school children to use outside toilets. However, the Chancellor's failure to provide any more cash despite his growing war chest leaves the real issues facing schools unresolved."

"Teachers' leaders welcomed the announcement, but wished only a step". He added: "Out-

side toilets are a breeding ground for germs and diseases and much educational time is lost because of the problems they create. Schools also lose a lot of time because of them being too cold to work in."

Six hundred schools, many in inner London and rural areas, still have outside lavatories. Officials estimate that one in five schools also have boilers over 20 years old. Ministers hope the work can be done within the next financial year.

that yesterday's announcement still left schools with an estimated £3 bn school repair backlog.

David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said he was delighted at the removal of the "last remnants of the Victorian age".

Doug McAvoy, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said the move was a "step in the right direction, but only a step". He added: "Out-

Lone parent mothers and fathers on the increase

By Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

THE NUMBER of lone parents has risen by more than a quarter in five years, while the number of children living with one parent has increased by a third, the Office for National Statistics said yesterday.

While most lone parents are women, the ONS, in its latest edition of *Population Trends*, says there is a steady growth in lone fathers, particularly those who have never married.

In 1971 only one in 13 families was headed by a single parent; now it is one in five. Estimated figures for 1996 put the number of single parents at 1.6 million compared with 1.23 million in 1990 and the number of de-

pendent children living in one parent families in 1995 is estimated to be 2.7 million, compared with 2 million in 1990.

Thirty years ago lone mothers tended to be widows or separated. Now nearly four out of ten lone mothers have never married, and with divorced mothers make up nearly three-quarters of all single mothers. There is also a small but growing proportion of women - one in seven - who have never married or cohabited with anyone.

The percentage of widowed fathers has halved since the early 1970s, with divorcees making up the largest percentage now. The growth in single lone fathers is, the ONS comments, "intriguing... It is entirely possible this is a genuine trend rep-

resenting a small but growing phenomenon of never-married fathers bringing up dependent children as part of a one-parent family".

The number of children per one parent family has also grown, while for couple families this has been the complete reverse. Since 1981 one-child families among one-parent families have fallen, while those with three or four children have grown. In comparison it is now more common for couple families to have one-child families and three and four-child families have become less frequent. Lone parents frequently have a sibling or more distant relative living with them or even someone other than a relative. The ONS suggests this is the case be-

cause lone parents have a greater need than others for more financial or practical support - such as paying guests or relatives to help bring up the children.

Lone mothers tend to be younger than lone fathers, with women tending to be in their early 30s, whereas men are in the early 40s - the age difference explained by the different marital status. The ONS notes that there is "tentative evidence" that the pace of increase of lone parent families may have slackened slightly in the most recent couple of years but that the prevalence is becoming an increasingly important part of our society.

Population Trends 91 is available from the Stationery Office, £19.

Prescott seeks private investors for Tube

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

JOHN Prescott will today unveil plans to allow up to three private companies to invest around £7bn in modernising the Tube system. But he will tell MPs he has kept his promise to keep London Underground "publicly owned and publicly accountable".

The Deputy Prime Minister will announce that bids will be invited for one, two or three private-sector companies to take over the concession to run the stations, lines and signalling

on contracts requiring the investment over 15 years.

It marks a victory for Mr Prescott over Treasury demands for a more radical sell-off for the "Tube" system. After contracts end, the infrastructure will return to London Underground.

The private bidders will be expected to carry out a complete refurbishment of tunnels, with improvements to escalators and signalling systems. They will be paid by London Underground from fare revenues to restore the capital's main arteries. London Underground will continue to run the services

and the refurbishment will include new rolling stock.

At a late stage, the Treasury sought to give the new, directly elected London Mayor and the assembly more powers over the private operation of Underground lines, but Mr Prescott has ensured contracts will be sealed before the Mayor takes over in 1999, pending a yes vote in May's referendum.

However, the Mayor and the assembly will take over responsibility for the London Underground system, which may include fares policy, making the Mayor's role a "real job".



Prescott: inviting bids

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Just have patience, Blair tells his audience

By Anthony Bevis
Political Editor

TONY BLAIR made a heartfelt plea for public patience yesterday, when the Prime Minister and Gordon Brown met 250 people for a post-Budget question-and-answer session.

Towards the end of a one-hour meeting with a cross-section of community representatives in the assembly hall of Geoffrey Chaucer School, south London, during which demands were made for pensioners, charities, business, childcare, further education, public transport and the arts, Mr Blair suddenly broke away from the detailed questions.

"Everybody wants everything and wants it the day before yesterday," he said.

He warned that he intended to be a Prime Minister for the long-term, laying down strong foundations, and there was no question whatever of taking short-term, short-sighted policies, for example, by relieving business of the pressure from the high-value pound. He said the

Conservatives had taken short-term decisions based on false prospectuses, and had created record interest rates, record repossessions and negative equity. "I never want to go back to those days again," he said. "The decisions that we take now, difficult though they are, are based on a long-term strategy."

Everybody wanted money from him now, but the Government was setting priorities and was moving steadily, step by step, and as Prime Minister, he had to have "the courage to say, 'No'". Mr Blair then launched into his version of the *Monty Python* spoof from *The Life of Brian*, in which people had asked: "What have the Romans done for us?" He said the Government had in fact made a start on welfare to work, schools, hospitals, and pensions. "And we are going to do more," he said. "But it will take time... We'll do what we can, but we can't do it all at once."

The difference between the styles of Mr Blair and Mr Brown could not have been

more marked - with the Prime Minister taking his jacket off and regularly smiling at the audience - but the session was also marked by a double-act banter between the two men.

At an early stage of the proceedings, Mr Brown said some of the questions were not so much reflections on his Budget statement as early representations for the next Budget - "if 'Baby lets me give it'", Mr Blair quipped, "You're doing fine", to which Mr Brown replied, quick as a flash: "It's not a plea."

The only hard news came in a throwaway line from the Chancellor, who disclosed that he expected an announcement to be made on the future of state pensions in June, following completion of a Government review.

At the end of the meeting, there was another double-act exchange, when Mr Blair said people who had not got their questions in could send them in. "Difficult questions to Number 10," Mr Brown said. "And I will pass them on to Number 11," the Prime Minister added.



Double act: Tony Blair and Gordon Brown at the post-Budget session at Geoffrey Chaucer School, south London, yesterday. Photograph: Brian Harris

Unions call for summit on worker rights

By Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

TWO OF the Labour Party's biggest financial backers last night called for the first emergency meeting of the TUC Congress in more than two decades if their worst fears about the Government's attitude to workers' rights are realised.

Following a meeting between TUC leaders and the Prime Minister in Downing Street on Wednesday, the left-led Transport & General Workers' Union and the right-wing Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union are seriously concerned that the "Fairness at Work" White Paper will prove objectionable to the union movement.

Bill Morris, leader of the transport workers, believes the



Bill Morris: Fears barriers to trade union recognition

document will propose legislation with unacceptable barriers to union recognition and last night told a meeting of businessmen in Guernsey that he would be calling for a special TUC meeting. The engineers' leader Ken Jackson, who is equally concerned about Tony Blair's strategy, said that he would support a call for an emergency session of the union movement if the White Paper did not meet the TUC's demands.

John Monks, general secretary of the TUC, however attempted to pour cold water on the idea. He expected a White Paper in line with Labour's manifesto and there were no plans for an extraordinary meeting apart from a long-planned conference on employment rights scheduled for 6 May which would be addressed by Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade.

The intended legislation was a significant part of the *quid pro quo* which resulted in a co-ordinated silence among union leaders before the last election and has led to continued passivity ahead of the White Paper.

The concern of the unions follows the Downing Street meeting, but has also resulted from continuing contacts with ministers over the past few months. Anxiety among union leaders was exacerbated by news earlier this week that Tony Blair had been actively opposing a European directive aimed at giving workers enhanced rights to consultation and information.

The TUC conference meets annually and the last "reconvened congress" took place 22 years ago to discuss the so-called Social Contract between the then Labour government and the unions.

The White Paper and the legislation which will follow it, could prove to be a watershed in relations between employees' leaders and the Government and could determine whether unions want to remain the main financial benefactors of the Labour Party.

Sources close to Mr Morris say he is concerned that the White Paper, due out within the next month or so, will stipulate a turnout rate in excess of 70 per cent for any ballot on union recognition. Senior officials at the union are also concerned that the document will suggest that management should be allowed to conduct ballots on "derecognition".

Other clauses causing concern would prohibit industrial action in disputes on recognition and introduce a three-year gap between votes. Sources at the T & G argue that such a law would "do as much harm as good" for employee representation.

Trade unionists generally have expressed their doubts that the Government would observe the spirit as well as the letter of the manifesto commitment. Hitherto attention has centred on whether the intended law would insist that recognition could only be granted where half the workforce voted for it, rather than those who voted. The 70 per cent threshold would be another way of ensuring overwhelming support. Another clause exercising trade union minds is how the constituencies for ballots will be determined.

A Downing Street spokesman said that the Prime Minister had confirmed the Government's intention to fulfil the pledge on recognition, but wanted to implement the change "sensibly" and only after full consultation with both unions and business. He said the meeting on Wednesday was "friendly and positive".



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Stop cricket funds, says MP

THE England and Wales Cricket Board should be deprived of public funds until it promises to improve its equal opportunities practice, an MP said yesterday.

A Commons early day motion put down by Liberal Democrat Theresa Harrell, who said she was bullied into having an abortion and then unlawfully dismissed. The motion said public and lottery funds should be stopped until assurances were given about employment policies. Jennifer Jongo, MP for Richmond Park and the motion's author, said: "I find it inconceivable that this sort of behaviour is prevalent today. We are no longer living in the dark ages."

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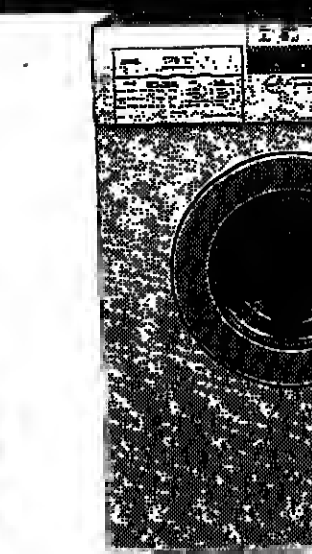
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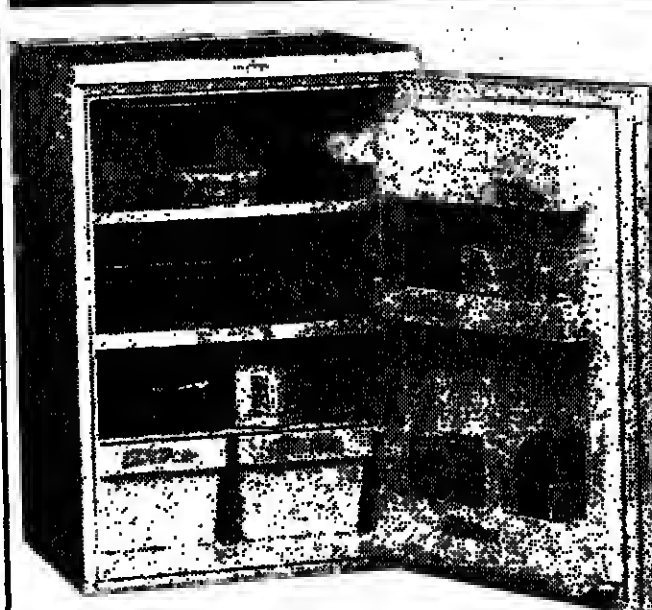
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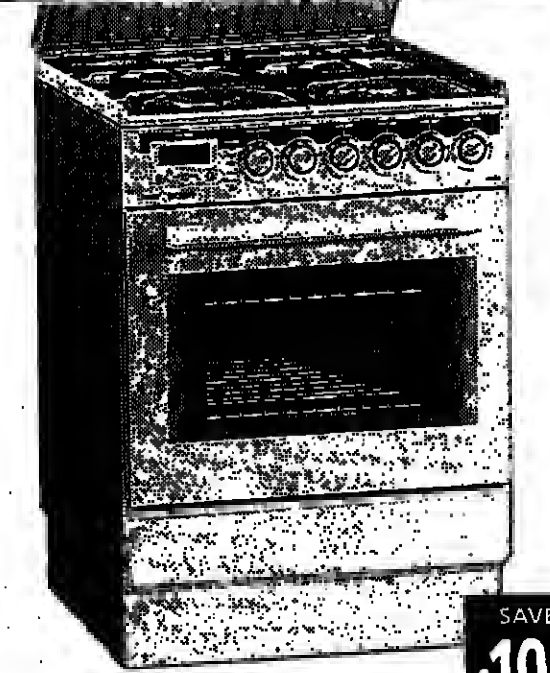
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Jews float plan



Jews float plan for their own TV channel

Leading Jewish broadcasters back idea which could even include a soap opera

By Rob Brown
Media Editor

REMEMBER Rebbe, the Rapping Rabbi, whose stand-up act used to make sporadic appearances on our television screens? Don't worry if you missed him. He could soon have his very own show.

Britain's Jews are being urged to seize the unique opportunity presented by the digital revolution to create their own television channel.

The call came yesterday from the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR), a leading international think-tank, and is being backed by prominent Jews who hold some of the most powerful posts in British broadcasting, including David Elstein, chief executive of Channel 5, Michael Green, chairman of Carlton Communications and Sir Jeremy Isaacs, founding chief executive of Channel 4.

His successor Michael Grade was also Jewish. Indeed, until he quit television last year, all of Britain's five terrestrial channels had Jews in prominent positions.

Sir Jeremy said: "There is the potential here for something really exciting and meaningful which reflects the diversity of Jewish lives, experiences and history, and combines modest new programmes, live broadcasts and anthologies the programming commissioned on Jewish themes over the last several decades."

Launching the think-tank's report *Jewish Television: Prospects and Possibilities*, its author Professor Roger Silverstone, professor of media studies at Sussex University, argued that a Jewish television channel could "reflect, express and enhance Jewish culture as an active and creative force within British society."

"It is high time that Jews participated in electronic media space to recover their heritage, to redefine their identity and their social and cultural contribution, and to make their presence felt in the wider public sphere."

Professor Silverstone, acknowledged that there was a risk of creating an "electronic ghetto" though such a narrow casting initiative. But he envisaged that the proposed channel would avoid this danger by appealing from day one to non-Jews. With Britain's Jewish population numbering around 300,000, the network would need to have wider appeal to be commercially viable. A working party will be set up to consider what would constitute kosher television.

"I personally would love to see a soap opera which worked within the stereotypes of Jews but didn't exploit them," Professor Silverstone enthused, adding: "There would doubtless also be lots of talk shows. Jews love to talk and talk is cheap TV." He admitted that Jewish radio wasn't flourishing in Britain and that, even with rich benefactors, a Jewish television channel would probably struggle to get established. But he believes the idea is worth exploring.

The JPR's ideas have been discussed at two policy seminars chaired by Michael Green and attended by a range of television and other media professionals, who believe that changes in media technology provide an opportunity to use television as a catalyst for reinvigorating contemporary Jewish culture.

Britain is set to become the first country in the world with national digital television, available on cable, satellite and terrestrial platforms, so many ethnic groups are seriously looking at how they could launch their own channel.

Ireland's national broadcaster RTE has joined with a leading American cable network to launch Tara Television in the UK, but it has been struggling to negotiate cable carriage.

Paul Maverick, who played the aforementioned Rapping Rabbi, was not available for comment. He's obviously not waiting for a Jewish television channel to change his fortunes. He was in Los Angeles yesterday hustling for commissions for his independent company, Shyster Productions.



Powerful figures: Sir Jeremy Isaacs (top left) and Michael Green (below), along with Lord Grade and his nephew, Michael, have all held prominent positions in British broadcasting

'This Life' gets new lease in the US

By Rob Brown

THIS LIFE, the BBC's deceased hit drama series about twentysomething Londoners, is set to get a second life across the Atlantic on a new coast-to-coast cable channel called BBC America.

Quite how the exploits of Egg, Anna and their fellow flatmates will play in Des Moines, Iowa, remains to be seen, but the BBC and its new global partner, Discovery Communications Inc are obviously prepared to risk offending Middle America.

BBC America aims to transmit almost everything the BBC produces - including *EastEnders* - rather than just the prestigious costume dramas and natural history documentaries which have been most avidly snapped up in the past by the American public broadcasting service, PBS and the A&E (Arts & Entertainment) cable channel.

The new network will start on 29 March with very limited reach on digital cable, but the plan is

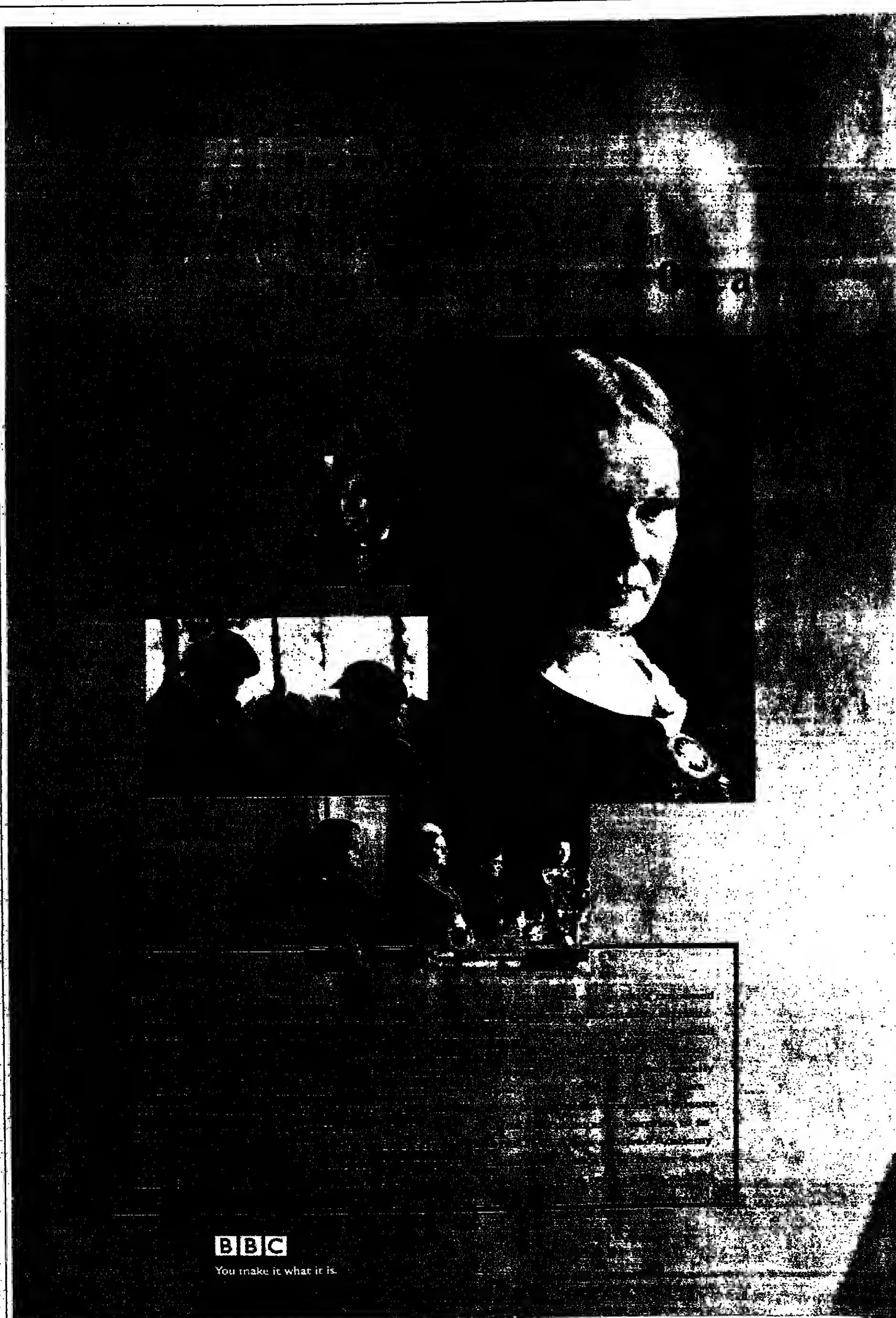
to get it into a large number of cable homes within the next few years. BBC America is just one element of a \$600m (£360m) global alliance between the BBC and Discovery, which was unveiled yesterday after 18 months of tortuous negotiations.

John Birt, the BBC's director-general, and Discovery's chairman and chief executive John Hendricks ceremoniously sealed the deal in a live transatlantic satellite link-up between Television Centre in west London and New York.

Mr Birt said: "This partnership will help the BBC become the world's leading global broadcaster. It is also good news for Britain, for the licence-payer, for British talent."

Mr Hendricks added: "The marriage of the BBC and Discovery brands is truly a match made in media heaven..."

The two corporations have already teamed up to launch two new channels, People & Arts and Animal Planet, which are available now in Latin America and will be rolled out across the globe.



BBC

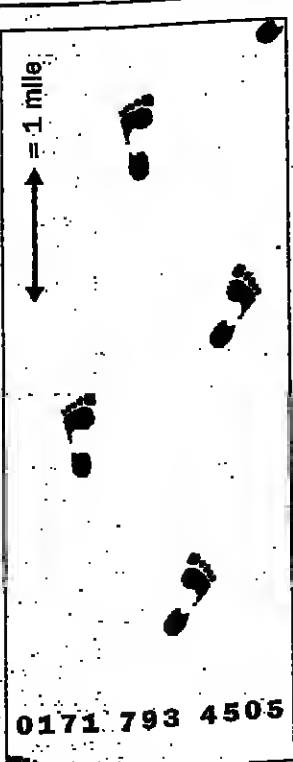
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Calais strike hits ferries

FERRY PASSENGERS face severe disruption today with the port of Calais being closed by a French workers' protest.

P&O Stena Line, the combined ferry company, said it would divert Calais services to Zeebrugge. A Dover-Calais ferry would sail at 2.30am today, with the next Dover-Calais boat not sailing until 3am tomorrow. It said it was not carrying foot passengers or day-trippers on Dover-Calais services.

French seafarers and dockers are staging a 24-hour strike over the proposed ending of duty free sales in Europe from next year - a move they see as a threat to jobs. They will close Calais from 5.45am today until 5.45am tomorrow.



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BIGGEST
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By Jason Bennetto
Game Correspondent

The judges said a "grave injustice" was done to Mr Roberts who was arrested at his home in Shrewsbury, Shropshire, at the age of 19. The also criticised police from the West Mercia force for not providing him

Mr Roberts, whose case was highlighted by *The Independent* in January, and a man named Richard Evans, theo

Mr Roberts was released last August pending the referral back to court by Jack Straw.

The confession was considered inadmissible and there was no case to answer, said Lord Justice Henry, sitting with Mr

Safina Din, from JM Wilson solicitors in Birmingham, said they would be considering claiming compensation for the miscarriage of justice.

By Jeremy Laurance
Health Editor

Five years after WHO declared tuberculosis a global

The infection already kills more people than Aids and malaria combined, yet it can be cured with a cocktail of cheap drugs. It is expected to infect

Two British specialists writing in the *International Journal of Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases* say cases of TB world-wide have risen 13 per cent since WHO declared its global emergency in 1993 and a "golden op-

The 16 countries in South America, Africa, Russia, India and the Far East identified by WHO account for over half of the world's 7 million annual cases of TB. The fear is that the longer control efforts are delayed the more difficult the epidemic will become to contain.

Dr Carlyle Guerra de Macedo

Tuberculosis is spread like the common cold through the air when infectious people cough, sneeze or talk. There are 6,000 cases annually in Britain and there have been outbreaks in New York and other cities.

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BBC

OUT NOW

Whitehall
tough
gets on
missions

Beaver set to return 400 years after being hunted to extinction



Rodent's return: The European beaver, which Scottish Natural Heritage hopes to reintroduce to the central Highlands

By Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

THE BEAVER could be returning to Scotland around the millennium, after being absent from the British Isles for more than 400 years. Yesterday, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the Government's wildlife conservation arm north of the border, made it clear that it was keen to reintroduce the big rodent.

But before deciding whether to go ahead, the agency launched four months of consultation. It needs to allay the fears of some landowners, anglers and foresters who worry that beavers' effect on trees and waterways might hit them in the pocket.

If the species is reintroduced from continental Europe, probably from Scandinavia, it will be the most ambitious such exercise ever attempted in Britain. Nothing near the beaver's size has ever been deliberately brought back to these islands again by man after being persecuted into extinction.

SNH thinks Scotland could support a population of up to 1,000 beavers in the central Highlands, along the rivers Lomond, Ness,

Spey, Ty, Dee, Don and their tributaries without the need to create any extra habitat.

SNH has spent two years researching whether it was feasible to bring back the beaver, and has concluded that it is. Chairman Magnus Magnusson said: "We need to be assured that the idea is acceptable to the people of Scotland."

A lengthy consultation document says that the reintroduction would "restore a missing element of our natural heritage". The species' remarkable abilities in felling trees and building dams could benefit other wildlife and create new wetland habitat. SNH is also convinced that what it calls "beaver-watching opportunities" would boost tourism.

The proposal has been backed by the Forestry Commission and the Scottish Wildlife Trust, a charity, which has offered one of its reserves to become home to the beaver.

If, after the consultation, SNH is still keen to press ahead, it will need to apply for a licence to bring in the European beavers from Donau Devar, Secretary of State for Scotland. The operation and follow-up monitoring will cost more than £100,000.

The dam builders

Beavers build dams from branches, trunks, mud and stones mainly to keep their burrow and nesting chamber entrance below water level. They do not always build dams, but when they do it creates large ponds and small lakes along streams. They also dig canals and construct low lodges on riverbanks.

They are excellent swimmers, with webbed hind feet, a flat, muscular tail and waterproof fur.

There are two species, the North American and the European. The latter weighs up to 20kg. They eat grass, herbs and shrubs through the summer, and the bark of broad-leaved trees, especially birch and aspen, in winter. One beaver is estimated to fell two tons of timber a year in its quest for food, but they do not attack conifers.

Their numbers were drastically reduced across Europe by hunting for their fur and the musk from their anal scent gland, which had medicinal uses. Since 1920 several reintroductions have been carried out; half have proved successful.

Whitehall sets tough targets on expulsions

By Ben Russell
Education Correspondent

LOCAL authorities will have to set tough targets for cutting the number of expulsions under a new government drive, announced yesterday, to improve bad behaviour in schools.

Estelle Morris, the education minister, said that to combat the spiralling numbers of children suspended or expelled, education officers should recruit and work alongside police, social workers and health experts.

Councils will have to publish plans for keeping problem pupils in school, and for dealing with those who have been expelled. Ministers hope to encourage authorities to follow the example of partnership projects involving the different agencies, such as those pioneered in Birmingham and Leeds, which have attempted to head off problems with pupils

before they are thrown out of school for good. Ministers also want councils to track expelled pupils' progress and to try to get the children back into mainstream education.

In Leeds, schools operate an early warning system, including a database to monitor truancy and bad behaviour, while in Birmingham, teachers provide mentors for boys at risk of expulsion.

Ms Morris said: "Rising numbers of permanent exclusions are of real concern. There were 12,500 exclusions in 1995-96, an increase of 1,400 over the previous year. We are determined to achieve a reduction in levels of exclusion and truancy."

She added: "There will always be some pupils with behavioural difficulties who will be excluded... I also expect plans to include clear and effective arrangements for educating these pupils, keeping track of their progress when they are out of school, and reintegrating them into mainstream schools where and when appropriate."

But Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, is not in favour of the move. "The idea is wholly misconceived and entirely inappropriate," he said. "Cases for expulsion should be judged on their merits, not on whether artificial targets will be met."

"This wholly unrealistic attitude to serious pupil discipline, if it prevails, will act as a serious deterrent for young people considering teaching as a career."

Local authority leaders warned that expulsions could increase still further if proposed changes to regulations were not reversed. The School Standards Bill removes the right of local authorities to veto expulsions, a change which has prompted anger among council leaders.

Ministers are currently considering amending the Bill to make schools consult local education officers during a 14-day cooling off period before expulsions go ahead.

Graham Lane, education chairman of the Local Government Association, said: "I think this could reduce or certainly stabilise exclusions. If the Government does not adopt the system they will quadruple the exclusions."

Education officers acknowledge that children face an uphill task in getting another school place after they have been expelled. For many the alternative is a few hours a week teaching at home, or a place at a special referral centre.

Local authority leaders say that half a day's home tuition a week can be as expensive as a full-time place at school, while sending a child to a referral centre costs up to £12,000 a year.

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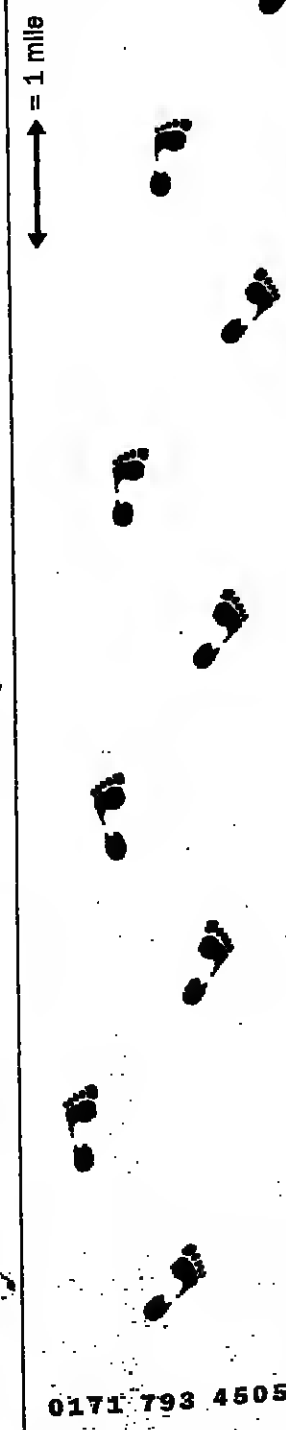
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OUT NOW

French right jumps into bed with Le Pen

FRANCE faces a potentially explosive crisis today which could transform the country's political landscape in dangerous and unpredictable ways.

Bowing to an open revolt by their own members, the French centre-right parties appeared ready last night to perform a moral and political volte-face and permit local alliances with the ultra-right National Front.

This would break a 10-year philosophical and strategic taboo on dealings with Jean-Marie Le Pen's ultra-nationalist and covertly racist party.

The Socialist Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, solemnly warned the "traditional" right against taking such a step, which, he said, would threaten democracy and the Republic itself. The bishop of Nîmes, in the south of France, said deals with the NF would amount to "prostitution".

The centre-right newspaper *Le Monde* reported that the French "traditional" right was in a state of "utter panic", following local election losses last weekend. If it made deals with the NF when regional assemblies meet all over France today, it would have reached its "darkest day".

In a signed front-page editorial, the paper's editor, Jean-Marie

Change ends taboo on deals with racist party John Lichfield, in Paris, reports

Colombani, compared the fast-moving muddle of recent days to the crises which had brought down French democratic institutions in the past. It might even become necessary, he said, to abandon the "devastated landscape" of the Fifth Republic and move to a new political system, as Italy had recently done.

The immediate issue at stake is the fate of maybe half a dozen regional governments, which are, in themselves, of limited political importance. The opaque results of a regional election last Sunday have precipitated a crisis between the weak and discredited leadership of the parties of the "respectable right" and their own grassroots members: a crisis which has been long in the making.

On Sunday, a coalition of the left topped the poll in 11 out of 21 regions in France proper but won a full majority in only one. In the other regions there was a right-wing "majority" but a majority split between the "traditional right", the Gaullist RPR and the smaller centre-right parties grouped in the

UDF, and the National Front. Before the elections, centre-right leaders swore that they would make no deals with the NF to stay in power in any region. Where the left topped the poll, it would be allowed to form a minority government.

In at least five regions local Gaullist and UDF leaders have repudiated this promise. They have entered sometimes secret, and sometimes open, negotiations with the NF for ultra-right support when the regional assemblies meet to choose their presidents today.

Despite dire warnings, and the threat of expulsion, already carried out against one former general secretary of the RPR, it became clear yesterday that deals were going ahead at local level in Languedoc-Roussillon, Picardy, Upper Normandy, Burgundy, the Pyrenees and, possibly, the greater Paris area, the Ile-de-France.

Local leaders were summoned to Paris yesterday to discuss ways of halting this insurrection. Officially, the RPR and UDF re-stated their

old position after the meeting: no regional governments would be formed with NF support. *Le Monde* reported, however, that centre-right leaders had been forced secretly to accept a compromise. There would be no formal deals with the NF; but if centre-right regional presidents were mysteriously elected with far-right votes, that would be accepted. The alternative, it was feared, was outright revolt.

There were similar accords with a then weaker NF in the late 1980s, which are generally reckoned to have boosted the Front and damaged the traditional right. There have been similar rows between the centre-right leaders and the grassroots in recent years. The present crisis is made more explosive by two factors.

First, there is the strength of the Front which has now taken 15 per cent of the vote in each of the last three nationwide polls. Second, there are the weaknesses and internal dissensions of the RPR and UDF, which have not recovered from the humiliating defeat in parliamentary elections last year. Deals with the NF, intended to keep the French centre-right parties together, could just as easily split them apart.



Flag-waving: After promising not to, the right may ally with Le Pen

Photograph: Charles Platiau/Reuters

Germans seek atonement, but final solution eludes them

By Imre Karacs
in Bonn



Günter Grass: Declared war on proposed monument

GERMAN efforts to find a fitting display of atonement for the Holocaust are in danger of degenerating into a farce. Not for the first time, the designs of the monument to be erected in Berlin in memory of the victims of the Final Solution have united politicians and the chattering classes in opposition.

Only weeks away from the decision, Berlin's mayor, Eberhard Diepgen, yesterday threw his weight behind those urging

a pause for thought. In an interview with *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, Mr Diepgen complained that not one of the four short-listed designs had convinced him that it was "possible to deal with this horror artistically".

The mayor, who heads a Christian Democrat-led coalition in the city in partnership with the Social Democrats, was scathing about the version closest to the heart of the Chancellor, Helmut Kohl. After vetoing the giant tombstone that had won the first artistic competition, Mr Kohl is back-

ing an equally vast labyrinth of 4,000 concrete pillars devised by two Americans, Richard Serra and Peter Eisenman. Those walking through the narrow passages, to be erected on the site of Hitler's devastated chancellery, are supposed to feel overwhelmed and disorientated. But Mr Diepgen said all he could see in this design was "monumentality", and virtually no reference to the Holocaust.

"It could be a memorial for a lot of things," he said. All four entries lying in front of the panel of independent judges had

more to say "about the inner conflicts of today's generation in relation to their parents" than about Nazi crimes.

The other options are a plan by Jochen Gerz to install 39 poles inscribed with the word "Why" in different languages; a broken wall designed by Daniel Libeskind; and 18 massive sandstone blocks, by Gesa Weinmiller, which, viewed from a certain angle, will coalesce into an abstract image of the Star of David.

Mr Kohl is urging a quick solution so that after 10 years of

debate work can begin. The ground-breaking ceremony, on former no-man's land between the Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag, is set for January 1999, the 54th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

If there is a further twist to this long-running saga, it could rob the city of the central monument it allegedly needs when the government returns to the capital in 1999. But that might not be a bad thing, argue the project's opponents, pointing to the numerous statues, museums and cemeteries already hon-

ouring Nazi victims. Intellectuals who started the campaign for the mother of all memorials, "the final solution to the Final Solution", have turned against the project, recoiling at the "monumental clichés" that have sprung from the fertile minds of fellow artists.

The writer Günter Grass, self-appointed conscience of the nation and former leading monumentalist, press-ganged 18 other intellectuals earlier this year into an "open letter" declaring war on the latest outbursts of architectural pathos.

Mayor Diepgen has travelled to Israel to canvass opinions, only to find indifference. The Jewish community in Germany is divided. Berlin's Jews cannot decide whether they should be flattered or repelled by such a grandiose scheme, not dissimilar in scale to the art of the Third Reich.

"I don't need this monument," says Ignatz Bubis, leader of the Jewish community in Germany. Whether Jews were able to live without it was never in doubt. The real question is: can Germans?

And suddenly

Joe Public,

becomes his

all over

Sharan

Anger as Hong Kong press chief beats law

By Stephen Vines
in Hong Kong

ARE NEWSPAPER proprietors above the law in Hong Kong? Or does this only apply to those serving on official Chinese bodies?

These questions arise following the appearance in court yesterday of three newspaper executives accused of a conspiracy to defraud, by artificially inflating the circulation figures of the English-language *Hong Kong Standard* newspaper.

The executives were charged after an investigation by the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), which found that they had conspired with Sally Aw Sian, the newspaper's owner, to defraud the advertisers. However, no charges were laid against Ms Aw, one of Hong Kong's best-known newspaper owners - and a prominent member of the Chinese People's Consultative Committee, a political advisory organ of the Chinese government.

Although the ICAC has made public its allegation against Ms Aw, the Department of Justice has declined to act. This has caused uproar in Hong Kong, where preserving the rule of law is seen widely as a litmus test of the credibility of the post-colonial administration.

Demonstrators gathered outside the Department of Justice's office yesterday to protest. Martin Lee, the leader of the Democratic Party, said the failure to prosecute "cries out for an explanation".

Even normally docile members of the non-elected Provisional Legislature have voiced

their misgivings and will be holding a meeting with Elise Leung, the Secretary of Justice, next Monday to seek an explanation.

Yesterday, Ms Leung's office issued a statement saying "this department does not consider the personal connections or political status of any suspect. In this particular case, these principles have been scrupulously observed".

Ms Aw controls the Sing Tao publishing empire which used to back the staunchly anti-Communist government in Taiwan. It switched support to Peking more than a decade ago. The Sing Tao group then became the first overseas publisher allowed to publish a newspaper in mainland China.

The situation is further complicated by the strong links between Ms Aw's family and Tung Chee-hwa, Hong Kong's Chief Executive. His family also used to be firm supporters of Taiwan and he sat on the Sing Tao board of directors for eight years.

Mr Tung declined to comment directly on the case but said, "the decision to prosecute or not rests entirely with the Secretary of Justice".

Last week, Mr Tung provoked protests when he dismissed another controversial decision. This time, it was not to prosecute the New China News Agency, which used to act as Peking's *de facto* embassy when Hong Kong was still a British colony and was widely believed to monitor the political stance of Hong Kong people.

The agency had breached the privacy laws but did not even get a reprimand. Mr Tung said that the matter was a mere "technicality".



Women mourning yesterday over the body of Albanian Qerim Muriqi, 52, who was killed by Serbian police on Wednesday during a rally in Pec, 50 miles west of the Kosovo capital, Pristina. Tension has been high in the Kosovo region since the Serbian police launched a brutal crackdown against ethnic Albanians earlier this month.

Photograph: Anja Niedringhaus

Pass the hairdryer, my peiga is just too much

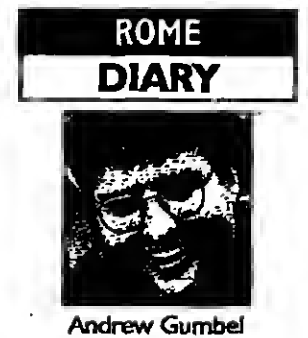
The Italians have got a thing about hair. I know this because a few years ago there was an advert on television for dandruff shampoo, or split ends, in which two glamorous professional women (the sort of people the papers here like to call *donna manager* to make them sound efficient and important) were exchanging small talk across their desks.

"Che stress!" the first one sighed melodramatically, even though she looked drop-dead gorgeous and unruffled by life's little vicissitudes.

"What is it? Your computer?" asked the other.

"No, it's my hair!"

Although this advert seemed hilarious, the Italians I knew thought it was a perfectly ordinary conversation for two immaculate fake blondes to be



Andrew Gumbel

having in the course of a morning's work. Can't stop worrying about her hair? That sounds perfectly plausible to us, they said.

I also know the Italians have a thing about hair because of a curious recent opinion poll conducted by the state broadcasting network teletext service, in which viewers were asked to name their favourite pastime.

The outright winner, picked by 68 per cent of respondents, was going for a hairdo.

Not watching football, not eating pasta, but a hairdo. I have visions of legions of Italians staring at themselves in the mirror each morning and wondering how many more days they will have to wait before they can at last justify another scintillating trip to the hairdressers.

After all, the establishments near my house are usually brimming with customers demanding a cut, or blonde highlights, or just a "do", known in Italian as a *peiga*. To this Anglo-Saxon sensibility, a *peiga* is hell on a head - lots of useless bouffant and application of gel, resulting in a confection that doesn't so much resemble hair as an 18th-century wig. But Italians love it, and are apparently willing to pay extortionate sums to have one as often as possible (my wife has had to scour every hair salon in central Rome to find one that

will cut her hair without insisting on the *peiga* too).

So diffuse is the culture of the *peiga* that one specialist salon operating near our house until recently even offered them to dogs. Outside, the shop sign announced canine stripping, trimming, *toilettaggio* and a host of other services, while inside the hapless pooches were chained to a medieval wash-basin, given the once-over with shears, shampoo, conditioner and blowdryer, and then, the ordeal over, were served a congratulatory bowl of Weetabix out of industrial-sized sacks.

I have to confess my understanding of the Italian obsession with hair is probably more acute because I used to have a thing about hair myself.

A couple of years ago, I became convinced I was losing great clumps of it. A kindly doctor eventually laughed in my face and told me to take life a little easier, but for a while I was scrupulously examining the manes of all around me to see who did, and who did not, have a Hair Loss Problem.

I recall a trip to Palermo. Sicilians are on average shorter than most Italians, so I could

gaze down on their scalps with ease. I failed to enlighten myself much on my own hair loss, but I did see the most extraordinary parade of hairdressing artistry, particularly among the meo - dark curls perfectly gelled into place, thinning patches brilliantly camouflaged with what meagre streaks were still available. I saw evidence of hours of painstaking labour, of visits to specialists, of scores of bottles on bathroom counters, of combs surreptitiously pulled out for little touch-ups. It had to be a labour of love.

And where there is love there may be fear. I suspect Italians are also scared stiff by the whole subject. This is a country where appearance is not only of paramount importance, but one where the right hairdo requires a balancing act of singular delicacy. Look too young and nobody will take you seriously. Look too old and your *bella figura* is shot to pieces. Thus the media magnate turned politician, Silvio Berlusconi, always insists on being photographed from his right (he looks less bald that way). Young people wanting to get ahead, meanwhile, either have their hair cropped conservatively short (men), or else (women) go in for the curlers-and-blowdry jobs one might have expected of their grandmothers. Foreigners like me can't hope to compete with this capillary obsession. I'm waiting for hats to come back into fashion.

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Rugby boss forces Mandela into court

By Mary Braid
in Johannesburg

THE BITTER relations between the South African government and national rugby boss Dr Louis Luyt plummeted to new depths yesterday when an angry President Nelson Mandela became the first head of state forced to defend his political actions in court.

Before taking the witness stand at Pretoria High Court, President Mandela said his blood boiled at being forced into the chamber by the controversial Dr Luyt to be grilled about his decision to set up a commission to investigate alleged racism, graft and nepotism in rugby, the game Dr Luyt has been accused of operating like a personal fiefdom.

Before taking the stand, the president said he had grave reservations about the unprecedented order for him to appear in court because it might open floodgates by which all presidential decisions might be challenged and government undermined.

The summons to the president, which has shocked many legal experts, was issued by Judge William de Villiers. The president's advisers argue that the judge is right-wing and reactionary, pointing out that he opposed the admission of blacks to the Pretoria Bar Council until the early 1980s and was conservative in apartheid era political trials.

Yesterday, Dr Luyt and President Mandela shook hands and chatted during intervals. But the heady early days of the new democracy when rugby proved a unifying force were



Scrum down: President Mandela, surrounded by bodyguards and journalists at Pretoria High Court, said his blood boiled at being called to court.

Photograph: AFP

the enemy" — rugby is a near religion to Afrikaners. Once he said Dr Luyt had played a "critical" role in transforming rugby. Now little was being done to bring rugby to the townships.

"I would never have imagined that Louis would be so insensitive, ungrateful and disrespectful to say when I gave my affidavit [submitted earlier to the court] I was lying," said the president, standing just feet from Dr Luyt.

Fink Haysom, President Mandela's legal adviser, said he could find no precedent within or outside South Africa for a president being called to court in this manner. He said he was appalled that President Mandela's written affidavit was being questioned. It was tantamount to saying the president was lying under oath.

The president's supporters, who packed the court, regarded the entire proceeding as disrespectful and a little humiliating to Mr Mandela.

The president said he was attending out of respect for the administration of justice. But it was clear he was keen to demonstrate openness. But why, he asked Judge Villiers, was Dr Luyt resisting transparency. "It gives the message he is hiding something," he said.

ling gone and there was no mistaking the underlying animosity.

Dr Luyt has accused sports minister Steve Tshwete of conducting a vendetta against him and is arguing in court that President Mandela did not properly consider the arguments for a commission but simply

rubber stamped Mr Tshwete's decision. He is also insisting that his South African Rugby Football Union (Sarfu) is a private association and should be free from government interference.

Yesterday President Mandela insisted that he alone had made the

decision to form a commission and that a sport which had played such a huge role in nation building could not be seen as a private matter, particularly when a cloud of suspicion hung over those who ran it. He said that Sarfu could not be left to regulate itself when internal democracy

seemed lacking. "The feeling is that Louis is a pitiless dictator," South Africa's first democratically elected president told the court. "No one can stand up to him."

President Mandela said he had risked his political future after his release by promoting "the game of

China shocked as PM shoots from the hip

By Teresa Poole
in Peking

IN A BREAKTHROUGH for Chinese communists, the new prime minister yesterday showed that the medium really can be the message.

Zhu Rongji, with humour and only minimal propaganda rhetoric, took to the stage for a live-broadcast press conference at which he fielded questions on the pro-democracy protests in 1989, and on elections in China. He promised to "blaze my trail" with a bold programme including the overhaul of industry, the civil and medical services, financial systems, and housing.

The performance of Mr Zhu, 69,

represented a seismic shift from his predecessor, the hardline Li Peng. Mr Li's press occasions have involved pre-selected journalists asking pre-cleared questions. Mr Zhu took anything that came his way, an approach which has not been seen since before 1989.

Nor would many of the topics discussed normally be aired on Chinese television. Mr Zhu was asked about 1989, when he was condemned as a "rightist" for criticising the Communist government and seat to the countryside. "I have learned a lot from that experience," he said. "But that experience was also unpleasant, so I don't want to mention that now."

The past reared its politically in-

correct head again with a question about whether the 4 June 1989 crackdown was a "historical burden" for the new government announced at the National People's Congress (NPC), which ended yesterday. Mr Zhu, who in 1989 was mayor of Shanghai, is credited with calming protesters in the city by promising not to send in the army. Yesterday he tied the official line on the "resolute" measures which "stabilised" the country. The party had already "drawn a correct conclusion on that matter", he said.

The future gave Mr Zhu more scope to find his own words. He was asked when China's president and prime minister might be elected by

universal suffrage. "Of course I'm in favour of democratic election," he said, praising village elections and elections inside enterprises. But the election of China's leaders involved "political restructuring, so that should be done according to legal procedures". And as for the timing: "It's hard now for me to predict when such an election can take place."

The NPC delegates themselves yesterday put on an unusual show of what voting can be like. When the results of a vote on the report from the Supreme People's Procuratorate flashed up on the board, a record 44 per cent of delegates had said "no", or abstained. This was the highest

protest vote recorded in the normally rubber-stamp NPC. These protests are seen as voicing widespread complaints about crime and corruption.

Mr Zhu reiterated his goals of overhauling state businesses and the creaking financial system and cutting the number of central government civil servants by half by the end of this year. And he joked that his picture on the cover of *Time* was "more good-looking" than the one in *Newsweek*, a slick way of letting the world know that he reads such international publications. The only thing he feared was letting down the people. "I will devote myself to the people and the country until the last day of my life," he said.

Serbs to pull out forces

The Yugoslav President, Slobodan Milosevic, agreed to withdraw his special forces from Kosovo, the German and French foreign ministers said. The French minister, Hubert Vedrine, said he supports a negotiated settlement of the Kosovo crisis with Kosovo Albanian leaders. Mr Milosevic said some of the Serb forces that killed 80 ethnic Albanians in retaliation for the deaths of four Serb policemen in February had already been withdrawn. —AP, Belgrade

Fall-out in Germany

A train carrying spent nuclear fuel began its controversial journey across Germany towards a waste-disposal site. A force of 20,000 police and troops are expected to protect the convoy, whose progress environmentalists have sworn to disrupt. The annual trip of waste to dumps in the north has become the focus of protests against the nuclear industry. Last year 20,000 environmentalists delayed the journey by undermining roads and chaining themselves to rails. This year the convoy left two days early and is racing to reach the Westphalian town of Ahaus before the gathering army of protesters. —Inna Karova, Bonn

Chinese going into orbit

China plans to launch a manned spacecraft within the next few years. "We will [also] launch a small lunar probe," Ma Xingrui, vice-president of the Chinese Academy of Space Technology, told an international meeting of space scientists.

—Teresa Poole, Peking

American dies in all-out fight

A thirty-year-old American, Doug Dodge, a father of five, collapsed with fatal injuries after taking part in what was billed as "a fight without rules" in Kiev, capital of Ukraine.

—Phil Reeves, Moscow



Zhu: Praised moves over greater democracy

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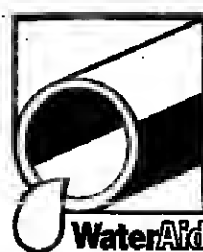
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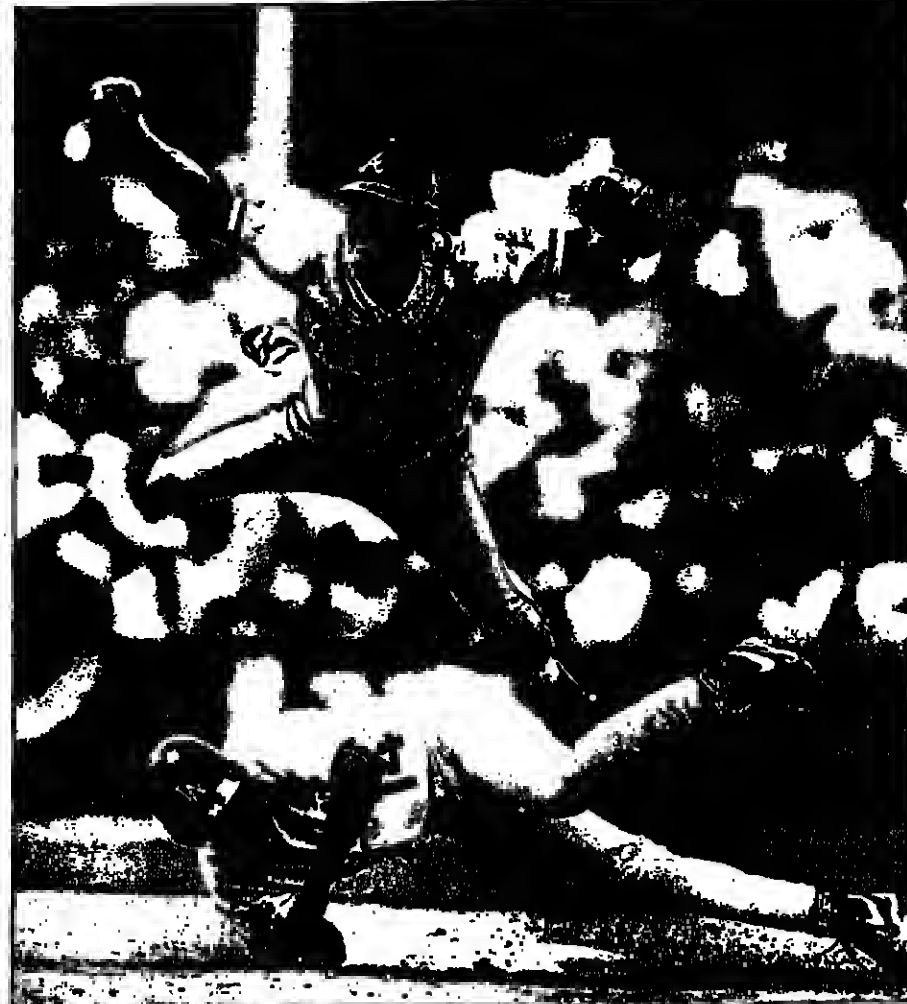
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Rupert strikes out Ted

Murdoch wanted one of baseball's mightiest teams. His media - and sporting - rival Ted Turner said: 'I'll squish him like a bug'. He didn't, of course. By Rupert Cornwell



Pitching in: When Murdoch, top, bid for the Dodgers, Turner (seen with his wife Jane Fonda) came out fighting - to no avail. Right: Turner's Braves and Dodgers fight it out



Magnolia Man - if she says so

HEAD bowed, he approaches the shop assistant with a tell-tale nervous smirk. Then he stabs at the palest colour on the sample card and waits for his pot of emulsion.

He is Magnolia Man, the terror of paint-store owners everywhere. For, all too often, his first, precipitate purchase is followed the next day by a visit from his wife. Can the paint, she asks, be exchanged for a bolder colour?

Not any more, she can't. A home decor shop in Aberdeenshire has had enough. Allan Gordon has put up a sign in his Alford premises warning that men will only be served with paint if they can show accreditation from their spouse.

"We will not supply husbands with coloured paint without a signed note from their wives," it reads. Mr Gordon's theory is that securing a woman's approval beforehand will save time for everyone. "The sign is just meant to be lighthearted," he says, "yet there is more than a wee bit of truth behind it. We find that women tend to rule the roost when it comes to picking paint colours. I suppose men still pick the cars, so women like to decide on the home."

Part of the blame for women's enthusiasm for brasher colours has been stirred up by popular TV shows such as the BBC's *Home Front* and *Changing Rooms*.

Thousands now watch each week as Swot teams of stylists are sent in to transform dreary dens, armed with no more than a roll of muslin, an improvised guava-print stencil and a pot of radiant orange daub. "There is a lot more experimenting going on," says Mr Gordon.

Graham Wynne, one of Carol Smillie's decorating sidekicks on *Changing Rooms*, acknowledges this. "There might be a whole rash of zebra-skin patterns going on all over the country," he admits.

According to Wynne, Magnolia Man is already an endangered species. "In the past, men were scared of having an opinion, but now they are beginning to take part. It is all part of the design revolution."

But even south of the border there is at least one Magnolia Man still thriving - style guru Wynne confesses that his own home is done out entirely in inoffensive cream.

Vanessa Thorpe

ONCE, when America was young and the Dodgers were still in Brooklyn, baseball was about players and their heroes. It was about emerald green ballparks in the blazing summer sun, about Joe Di Maggio's hitting streak and small boys begging for autographs. These days America's grown older, the Dodgers have long become the Los Angeles Dodgers, and even looser hitters charge \$5 an autograph. Baseball's about money. It's about team owners. And right now, it's all about Rupert Murdoch.

Last year, Murdoch, American by passport for the purposes of his ownership of the Fox network, but Australian in every other way, reached a deal to buy the Dodgers from the O'Malley family. Now baseball, for the reasons listed above, may no longer exert its romantic grip it once did on the American psyche. Even so, the sale of the linear descendants of the team that the O'Malleys brutally uprooted to the West Coast in 1957, is something special.

For one thing, there's sentiment involved. Even now, the word Dodger is one of the most emotive in American sport, but four decades ago, the move of Brooklyn's beloved "Bums" - the eternal underdog, the team which broke the colour barrier in major league baseball - was a small watershed in America's postwar history, an early symbol of how money and power were starting to move west across the continent from the Hudson River. This time too, there's big money around. The \$311m (£186m) Murdoch is reputedly to pay is a record for any US sports franchise. And then, last and most important, there are the owners: Rupert Murdoch, who now is an owner, and Ted Turner, who already was one and was desperate to prevent the rival he loathes from joining that élite.

Forget baseball's players. The action these days is not on those emerald fields of dreams, but in its boardrooms of megabucks. Gone are the Babe Ruths, the Di Maggios, and the Mickey Mantles of yesterday. The sport's household names, and its largest egos, now belong to the likes of Turner, owner of CNN, Turner Broadcasting Systems and the Atlanta Braves, or the autocratic Peter Angelos of the Baltimore Orioles who sacks a manager a year - or the detested George Steinbrenner of the New York Yankees who no sooner wins the World Series than threatens to take the team from the Bronx to New Jersey unless New York City obediently builds him a state-of-the-art \$1bn stadium in downtown Manhattan.

But these are mere caprices compared to Turner's feud with Murdoch, simultaneously epic and puerile. The two of them may bestride the global media business, yet



they trade insults that belong on the school playground. "I'll squish Murdoch like a bug," Turner brags, having previously likened his rival to Hitler. Yo-boo sucks, Rupert retorts, ordering Fox not to show even a glimpse of Ted or his wife Jane Fonda during its broadcast of the 1996 Series between the Yankees and the Braves.

Petty vanities, however, are only part of the story. Murdoch's advent is feared, too, for the reasons he is feared on this side of the Atlantic: that just as with News Corporation and the British newspaper industry, his true goal is not ownership of the Dodgers, but control of baseball. If he becomes an owner, critics warn, he gets access to the sport's innermost financial books. If this particular Fox is allowed into the chicken coop, mayhem may result. For through its local stations, Murdoch's network has the broadcasting rights for 22 of the 30 major league teams. This means Fox already helps deliver the audiences and advertising revenues which provides much

of baseball's money. Combine that role with new-found access to data which the owners traditionally share among themselves, and small wonder some people are already talking about "Rupert-ball".

They paint a devilish scenario; of the Dirtiest of Diggers calculatedly weaken-

ing rivals by, say, holding up the extension of a lucrative broadcasting contract. Its coffers temporarily dry, a team might be prevented from buying, or forced to trade, a star player. And Murdoch-the-owner could drive baseball's already bloated salaries

through the roof. This year will see a test case, when the contract of the Dodgers' superstar catcher Mike Piazza comes up for renewal. The talk is of a six-year deal worth an unprecedented \$100m. But what Murdoch wants, Murdoch is prepared to pay for. Unsurprisingly, it is less opulent than

Murdoch and Turner may bestride the global media business, yet their feud has seen them trade puerile insults that belong on the school playground

chises like the San Diego Padres, condemned to live in the long shadow of the Dodgers just up the coast, which are most uneasy about letting Murdoch among them. Probably the fears are overdone. Fox is only one of four US terrestrial networks

and by some way the smallest of them. If Murdoch is a big fish on the other side of the Atlantic, America is a far larger pool than Britain. And while the Dodgers are huge, with TV followings not only in California, but also Japan and central America, they are not necessarily higher than the Braves, not to mention the Yankees, probably the most valuable franchise in all American sport. Last night that reasoning prevailed. Despite every curfewball Ted Turner threw, the Dodger deal went through by 14 votes to one, when the 16 National League franchises took the decision at their meeting in Miami.

And talking of the Yankees, they are now said to be the object of a bid from another US media giant, Cablevision, for a rumoured \$550m, which would eclipse the record set by the O'Malleys' sale of the Dodgers. But if that means the end of Steinbrenner, most Yankee fans - and not only Yankee fans - will reckon the advent of Murdoch is a reasonable price to pay.

They deny the risk, and play Russian roulette



JOHN LYTTLE

WHATEVER happened to Aids?

Typed out, the sentence seems spectacularly dumb: a sick joke. After all, there's plenty of HIV about; more than enough for everyone, gay, straight or bisexual.

Globally, it continues to kill hundreds of thousands, the vast majority heterosexual. Rates of infection rampant, barely checked, in the Third World; India, Asia and huge stretches of Africa especially.

In America, Aids remains the third biggest cause of death in professional urban women in their late twenties to late thirties and would perhaps even nudge into second place if the cause of death were honestly declared on death certificates.

Amongst young gay men, levels of HIV infection have risen for a fourth consecutive year, perhaps because the young feel invulnerable - it can't happen to me - perhaps because of internalised self-loathing - it should happen to me - or maybe because of sheer impatience: I don't care if it happens to me/I want it to happen to me.

Wanting Aids to be over, one can act as if it is. If I don't practice safe sex then Ted, Dark, Deadly Stranger will go away. And if that doesn't work, I'll reverse direction. I'll embrace the Ted, Dark, Deadly,

Stranger and in that manner remove his sovereign power. I'll log on the internet, link up with the like-minded, or get my ass to a club where trendy "Bareback" is the thing, condoms are forbidden and sex is unprotected.

"Bareback": this year's Russian Roulette.

Ah, the intricate ingenuity and bountiful if blasé homosexual imagination. Routinely and eternally forced to subvert circumstance, some of us can't help but "re-gay" Aids by transforming even the threat of a lingering death into a fashion, a fad, a fetish.

But then the notion of a lingering death has receded since the advent of triple-combination therapies a couple of years ago. This despite the very clear message that combination therapies aren't a cure - a happy hour still years off - but at best a holding operation, and a laborious, side-effect laden operation at that: 30, 30, 40 or more tablets a day, to be taken with saturated fats, before

Facts easily and often forgotten: triple-combinations don't work for everyone. And no one actually knows how long they will work for those they currently work for. At present the virus appears contained and cannot duplicate or mutate. But the virus and its multifarious strains are pregnant with shock-horror and the chemical mixtures themselves may lose effectiveness. We sail the uncharted seas of the human immune system and - let's mix our metaphors - have yet to come to full grips with the implications of Lazarus Syndrome.

If people with Aids are to live longer and might (or might not, given the treatment's side-effects) be able to return to employment, what does this mean at a time when our caring, sharing government appears determined to cut disability and associated benefits? People who live longer cost more money, not less. It might be sensible to prepare for long-term surprises, except optimism and

mutate but it has evolved. It has not merely become (according to some) "survivable". It has also become ordinary. Hence the *Daily Mail*, tired of queers whinging though whinging itself about "state hand-outs to perverts". Hence the prissy queen who bumps into you on the dance floor and bullies you because your lesions are "spoiling everyone else's fun". Hence the short-sightedness of Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster Health Authority, who on one hand hype combination therapies and yet cut another £1.7m from London Lighthouse's already beleaguered budget. How then to continue providing a holistic service for those who will have to live (longer) with Aids as well as probably die from it? Slapdash irony: London Lighthouse forced to sell off its west London site and with it the residential unit, currently running at 85 per cent capacity, merely to maintain a basic level of day-care services, medical, psychiatric and physically supportive, and all because of... a bunch. A bunch that combination therapies will always prove successful when there is, to date, no evidence to support that conclusion.

But, of course, we're not talking conclusions (fact). We're talking closure (emotions). Aids is not over or gone, just as herpes isn't gone or over. We simply stopped listening to those who had herpes, handed them the next new, improved wonder lotion and told them to shut up. We'd been there and done that, OK? And we were lucky. So far, no time bombs waiting to explode. We can hope that this will be the case again but really, has anyone thought to tell the bareback riders, the boys in the backrooms and those whose T-cell counts have scant regard for the zeitgeist and pessimistically continue to plunge?

Some of us can't help but 're-gay' Aids, turning even the threat of lingering death into a fashion, a fad, a fetish

going to bed, cloaked with carbohydrate, whatever. This is not to make light of combination therapies (I have witnessed too many friends regain an almost miraculous semblance of health) but to point out very real short-comings: Aids still dictates every hour of every day. You could live longer but you still won't be able to leave the house, or, at least, not for long. There are pills to pop and all strength to conserve and all those heaving forms to the council to complete.

exhaustion are a potent - and potentially lethal - partnership, and there's this ad-hoc unholy alliance emerging that (justifiably and unjustifiably) wants Aids to be gone and refuses to acknowledge reality or possible reversal. Cultural conspiracy theory - "Whatever happened to Aids?" - is in the air, beyond compassion fatigue and nearer boredom, not that Aids is no longer a rush, a Gothic romance or even a cheap opportunity to sensationalise. Aids may not

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Time Computer Systems

Alan Murdoch finds a deserted Kerry village becoming an artistic haven. Photographs by Brian Harris

George
Hitchings



Sanctuary: The uninhabited village of Ballinskelligs with one of the restored houses (right) which have become homes to hundreds of international artists since 1991

On the shores of inspiration

marr Rainbow

AGAINST the Ring of Kerry's epic landscape of slate-grey cliffs and vast sweeping valleys, scattered cottages crouch low against blasting gales on steep slopes. This is not conventional beauty, but something more invigorating, wilder, resonant of Atlantic power. Small wonder then that this stark scenery should so forcefully grip the imaginations of artists.

Since its foundation stone was laid in 1991 by then-Taoiseach Charles Haughey over 180 have now visited, living and working in the embryonic community of Cill Rialaig on the western tip of the Ring, close to the haunting triangular Skelligs.

Cill Rialaig had been in steady decline since the potato famine 150 years ago. Now there are plans for half of the settlement's original 14 ruined cottages to be renovated, with the two already completed available free to visiting artists. Painters, enraptured by the unique morning light, work beneath a glass roof. Yards from the cliff edge, the dwellings face directly out into the Atlantic.

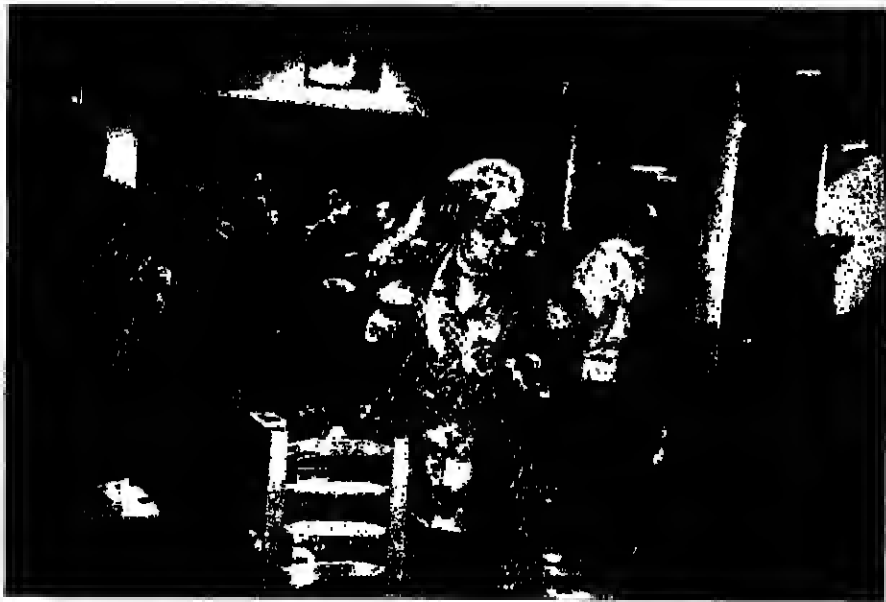
Anne Kampmann, currently visiting from Norway, paints moody abstract works. Walking the nearby headlands, she feels "the pressure of history here. I think the spirit is here in a very heavy way."

The project was the brainchild of Dublin publisher Noelle Campbell-Sharp, a regular visitor down the years. A busy socialite and sometime rock band manager, she traces the origins of the project to an unlikely celebrity.

"If it hadn't been for Robert Maxwell nothing would have happened," she confesses. Campbell-Sharp, an energetic super-saleswoman became known as the only person ever to make money out of the bouncing Czech, after selling him her stable of up-market women's glossy magazines, among them *Irish Tatler* and *Social And Personal*. Dublin will promptly rename her "Razor-Sharp Noelle".

Maxwell went to his grave before her payment was completed. She retreated to Kerry "to lick my wounds". It was then she conceived her rejuvenation plan.

She admits many were initially wary of "this mad woman from Dublin". She, after all, used to promote her coffee-



Approval: Vi Lawlor, 75, a wealthy widow and socialite, celebrates with an Irish coffee at the gallery opening in Ballinskelligs



Celebration: The evening flows into the small hours and there is no sign of an end to the set dancing in the local bar

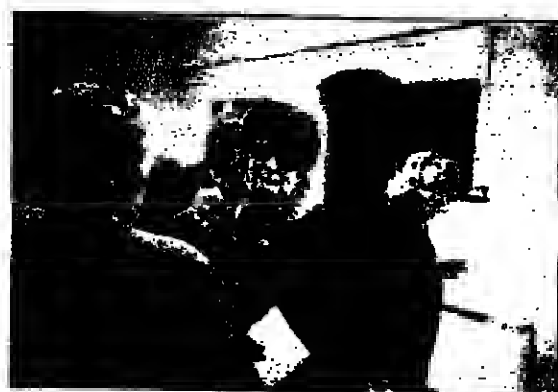


Exertion: American artist Joan Boryto runs at 7am using rocks for weights through the abandoned village. Across the bay a large international art gallery is planned for Waterville, which, it is hoped, will rival the Tate at St Ives



The finished work Paintings of New England (top) and Ballinskelligs (bottom) by Joan Boryto

'The pressure of history is here. And the spirit is here'



The fruits: Writer Terry Keane at the new gallery with Noelle Campbell-Sharp in the background

table reading for the hunting classes, while her elegant vintage Bentley was a familiar sight double-parked outside the Shelbourne Hotel, prime watering hole of the Tara set. She did manage to squeeze Irish high-society for donations through golf-classics and auctions. Rebuilding the first two cottages cost £50,000 each.

The artists come from as far afield as Argentina, Russia, and Italy. A tradition has arisen at Cill Rialaig of leaving behind a work of art produced there, which is sold to raise funds. Italy's 1996 painter of the year, Aurelio Caminati, left an entire summer's output. The outward influence is visible in Irish-related exhibitions now running in Milan, Genoa, Glasgow and Cornwall.

The last, most ambitious venture is a large international art gallery planned for Waterville, five miles across Ballinskelligs Bay, paralleling the Tate at St Ives.

Last Saturday, a mile from the village in the project's impressive new gallery-restaurant with adjacent workshops, Campbell-Sharp brought her contrasting metropolitan and country circles together. To open a group show, amid intense local interest, she lured down a real celebrity in the form of Terry Keane, Dublin's principal gossip writer and "close friend" of Charles Haughey ("Sweetie" in her weekly newspaper column). Last week a Dublin magazine named her "the sexiest woman in Ireland".

The retinue also included the scarlet-clad Vi Lawlor, 75-year-old good-time girl and wealthy widow with a liking for vintage "shampoo", dancing on tables, who resorts to a Rolls-Royce for race meetings when the helicopter is booked up.

With Campbell-Sharp in Dublin (running a gallery and planning a cigar-and-wine club) a board involving Kerry business and professional figures run the art project. Local people have warmed to it. Tom Horgan, the owner of a small caravan park, says, "We want quality tourism, not to destroy the place", while GP Derry Gibson says "Psychologically, it is important to have such wonderful art here, to show there is something happening".

Inquiries to: The Cill Rialaig Project, Ballinskelligs, County Kerry, Ireland. Fax: 00353 66 79324.



صلى الله عليه وسلم

...who was aware of the true nature of the article he was imputing would, however, be guilty if the jury concluded that the appellant had the tendencies specified in section 1(1) of the 1959 Act. The offence was not incapable of commission, and the appellant had no grounds for maintaining that his conviction was unsafe.

Kate O'Hanlon, Barrister

THE INDEPENDENT

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Why our prisons are not working

"PRISON WORKS" must rank as one of the most fatuous slogans ever devised and, in terms of its persuasive power, one of the least effective. Michael Howard, the villain of this particular piece, adopted the air of an impatient head teacher explaining the laws of logic to a class of dim pupils when he pointed out that if criminals were in prison, they could not be committing crimes against people outside.

The slogan's crassness was all the more apparent because it was invented for the purpose of countering one of the cleverest and most persuasive slogans recently deployed in politics. Labour's claim to be "tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime".

Now, however, the superior slogan is being tested against the harsh world of reality. The prison population, which was around 45,000 throughout the Conservative years, with a slight bump upwards in the late Eighties, started to rise when Mr Howard became Home Secretary in 1993. It turned into a trend which cannot be easily or quickly reversed. Especially when we consider both how committed the Labour government is to the first part of its slogan, and the inevitably long timetable implied by the second part.

By the time of the election last year the prison population in Britain had shot past 60,000. Now there are 65,000 people in prison, with the figure expected to rise to between 83,000 and 93,000 in seven years' time.

This is the background against which to read yesterday's confirmation by the Board of Visitors at Wormwood Scrubs that brutality by prison staff against inmates is something which "goes on". Overcrowding is a serious problem which, combined with low morale among large parts of the Prison Service, is bound to create breakdowns of discipline of all kinds.

Jack Straw, who has inherited Mr Howard's trembling pressure-cooker, urgently needs to ask why Britain locks up a greater proportion of its population than any other European country except Portugal, and why that proportion is rising so fast. As Mr Howard might explain in pedantic tones to his dim class, recorded crime is no longer rising, so it is because criminals who appear in court are more likely to be locked up and to be locked up for longer than before. Partly, this is the result of more lock-'em-up legislation, and partly because the courts have responded to the climate of lock-'em-up rhetoric in which they work.

To Mr Straw's credit, he resisted the knee-jerk populism of the Tory "three strikes and you're out" proposals for burglary, imposing compulsory jail terms on third-time offenders. And he has also changed his line on electronic tagging. Home Office plans for 30,000 offenders a year to serve community sentences under curfews enforced by tags should be treated with scepticism – not least because the assumption behind tagging is that criminals behave rationally – but tagging could be a way of unwinding some of the hard-line rhetoric without appearing soft on crime.

However, many thousands too many people are still destined to end up behind bars before anything resembling action on the "causes of crime" will show through. Even if all the pledges of ending social exclusion, tackling truancy, ending the pressure on boys to behave badly, take us eventually to the promised land, in the meantime far too many will be brutalised, physically and emotionally, by a prison system which plainly is not working.

There are two groups of prisoners which should be Mr Straw's priorities. The first is the 8,000 remand prisoners, an eighth of the total, all of them innocent until proved guilty, many of them receiving a crash course in drug use or the habits of crime. Labour has promised to speed up the average 13-week delays for young offenders, but older offenders matter too, and at the very least speeding up youth cases should not be at the expense of the rest of the system.

Then there are the 8,000 black people, eight times over-represented in the prison population in relation to their numbers in the country as a whole. Five of the eight prisoners alleging brutality in the Scrubs are black. There is evidence that black criminals are more likely to receive custodial sentences than white ones, although most of the over-representation occurs before the courtroom is reached. Mr Straw said in a pre-election interview with this newspaper that one of the three legacies for which he wanted to be remembered was successfully tackling racism. The other two were incorporating the European Convention on Human Rights and "catching and dealing effectively with" more criminals. Well, we have heard plenty about those two. Let us hear more about being tough on racial inequality and tough on its causes.

Blair taken for a spin on the moral barbecue

TONY BLAIR'S failure to register the hospitality extended to him by Formula One bosses was a fairly trivial offence, to be sure, but it raises an important issue.

Sir Gordon Downey, the public servant paid to stand guard over MPs' morals, concludes that the Blair family day out among the Marlboro boardings had a "value" of more than £215, and so should have been declared. We are not wholly convinced, because the then leader of the Opposition did not come to see the motor racing, which is why other people pay money for the tickets.

What Sir Gordon did not say, because he appears not to have access to a newspaper cuttings library, is that Mr Blair's children were driven around the Silverstone track by Damon Hill. Now, that is a perk worth a bob or two, which the Prime Minister strangely omitted to mention in his defence.

Which brings us to the serious point. Be he ever so high and ever so convinced of his own moral purity, it is healthy that the Prime Minister be tested on the moral spit on which he so roasted the Tories when he was on their side of the fire.



MILES KINGSTON

VERY UNUSUAL JOBS INDEED
No 37 in a series: The woman who
auditions voices for BBC Radio.

"IF YOU can't remember what a voice sounds like, that probably means I've chosen the right voice for the airwaves."

The speaker (and a very nice voice it is too) is Eleanor Grebe, whose job it is to make sure that the voice fits the role on BBC radio. Does that mean that some voices would be no good for some roles?

"Of course. A man who sounds good reading the news would sound awful interviewing Gordon Brown, and vice versa. Think of all the programmes like *PM* and *The World at One* and *Today*, where the newsreaders are unburied, and measured, and calmly statesmanlike, with slightly deep voices. Then think of the presenters, who are all slightly urgent, as if they thought that what they were saying was burning to be said, and are dying to

get on with it. You could never have Brian Perkins interviewing anyone, as his questions would sound too complete to need an answer. By the same token you can't imagine John Humphrys reading the news. I don't think you'd really trust him. Oddly enough, people like Brian Perkins are also ideal when reading out very silly news cuttings on *The News Quiz*, as their measured, grave tones make the idiocy sound even more funny.

"Actually, the news is probably easier to read than the weather forecast, because the weather readers have to grasp your attention much more. If your attention wavers from the news, and you miss the item about Jonathan Aitken or relaxation on the beef ban, then there's no harm done, because it was going to be boring anyway. But if you miss the forecast for your corner of the UK, you've missed out something vital to your life. So the weather men have to be crystal clear."

Would she call Ian McKaskill clear? Some

people can't make out a word he's saying. "It's very important to have regional accents on the weather," says Eleanor Grebe, avoiding the question, "and it's also important to have a weather forecaster that Rory Bremner can imitate. Without McKaskill, who could he do on the weather front?"

There seems to be a preponderance of Scottish accents when it comes to the regions. Is this to satisfy the touchy Scots?

"Not really," says Eleanor Grebe. "In fact the Welsh are touchier than the Scots, and we should have more Welsh accents, but most of the men we employ who are proud of being Welsh, like John Humphrys, have unfortunately lost their Welsh accents. We have seriously considered trying to train him to get it back, but it's probably too late."

"One way in which we have contrived to placate the Scots is to place Scotland first in the weather forecast on Radio 4, so the Scots think they are getting preferential treatment."

What they don't realise – and I'd rather you didn't mention this – is that first in the weather forecast is the worst place you can get, because nobody ever listens to the first bit of a forecast, on the grounds that they assume their home area will never be dealt with first."

What sort of voice is used for really weighty announcements? I mean, when war starts or when, God save us, the Queen Mother dies?

"Oh, we have already sorted out who is going to announce the Queen Mum's death. In fact – and I'd rather you didn't mention this – it has already been recorded. All the announcements and the tributes are ready to roll. In fact, I am told that Jeremy Paxman – who, by the way, would be the worst person possible to announce the Queen Mum's death, because he would sound as if he were trying not to laugh – I am told that Jeremy Paxman has already recorded a special *Newsnight* item on her death, asking ques-

tions like 'If you knew her death was on the cards, why wasn't something done about it and will heads roll?'

Finally, after the Welsh and Scots, what about Irish voices? What is the BBC's current policy on Irish voices? Why was Gerry Anderson given the boot when he had such a nice voice? Is Sean Rafferty being inserted into Radio 3 to rival Henry Kelly's success on Classic FM? Whither Terry Wogan? Whence Frank Delaney? Is BBC radio being plastered with Irish accents the way pubs are turned into Irish theme pubs? What is the BBC's policy?

"I'll tell you. Our policy is to encourage the Irish voice in all areas but one. We will never let an Irishman read the news."

Why not?
"Because he would sound like EITHER Ian Paisley OR Gerry Adams. Think about it."

I do think about it. And it makes sense.

PICTURE OF THE DAY



Chilling out: Goldie, a hip-hop performer, in Chalk Farm, London

Photograph: James Rexroad

Suing for distress

PROFESSOR Andrew Burrows, author of the recent Law Commission report on liability for psychiatric illness is quoted as saying: "The law is not saying you can recover damages just because you were upset because of grief or anxiety. There is a line and we are saying there should continue to be a line between a recognised psychiatric illness and mental distress." ("Reforms may allow 'Hillborough' awards", 10 March.)

This is an example of how out of touch an academic lawyer can be with what actually takes place in personal injury litigation.

It is possible for a subject to be seen by a neurologist, cardiologist, endocrinologist or chest physician and leave the consulting room having been told there is nothing wrong with him or her. It is virtually impossible for someone to be interviewed by a psychiatrist and leave the consulting room without having some psychiatric label attached to them.

Psychiatrists are adept at interpreting all human behaviour and emotional reactions in terms of psychopathology. Understandable reactions of unhappiness and concern are "diagnosed" as depression and anxiety. A problem in dealing with a particular situation is regarded as an "adjustment disorder".

As far as litigation is concerned, time and time again what a social worker or a priest or any member of the public would regard as understandable mental distress is "diagnosed" by a psychiatrist instructed by a plaintiff's solicitor as some form of psychological illness which is deserving of damages. The expert instructed by a plaintiff's solicitor is only too well aware that if he writes a report which is "helpful" with regard to a particular case, he is likely to go on being instructed in the future. It is entirely understandable that the Bar should regard experts as "hired guns".

If the proposals of the Law Commission are accepted, there will be an absolute flood of reports prepared by psychiatrists claiming that friends and relatives of the victims of accidents are suffering from some form of psychological illness. Whatever benefits may accrue to

the legal profession, it will be the public who will foot the bill, for insurers will now have to face claims not only from the plaintiff but from members of the plaintiff's family. Dr LEOPOLD HENRY FIELD
London W1

Masons on the bench

I WAS stunned by the report (18 March) that Lord Bingham, the Lord Chief Justice, has told a committee of MPs that there is no reason for judges to declare their membership of the Freemasons as there is no evidence that they had been corrupted by their connections with the secret society.

To suggest that there is no evidence that any judge has ever been diverted from his duty by any conflict arising from membership of the Freemasons beggars belief. How can it possibly be known if there has been a conflict of interest if we do not know which judges are Freemasons and which are not?

Since Lord Bingham says he knows that there are only a "minute" number of Freemasons in the judiciary, it follows that he is party to this information. As citizens who come within the compass of the judiciary, we should be allowed to share this information.

GEORGE MCKELL
Gifford, Perthshire

Watchdogs with teeth

YOUR leading article of 11 March, which criticised the National Audit Office's report on water pensions and suggested that there is disparity in the rigour of treatment between local and central government, was uncharacteristically inaccurate.

When dealing with the improper use of public funds, the NAO also names those responsible. Recent reports on English Heritage and Swansea Institute of Higher Education illustrate the point.

LETTERS

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number
Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Other than the work of district auditors, which is by definition specific to individual councils, the Audit Commission prefers to focus on best practice. When dealing with matters of value for money, as the water pensions report did, the Audit Commission, far from naming and shaming, have a policy of naming only those authorities which fare well in their assessment – poor-performing authorities remain anonymous.

When comparing NAO reports with those of the Audit Commission, it is important to remember that, unlike the Audit Commission, the NAO report is but the first stage in the process. NAO reports form the basis of a public interrogation of the responsible officials. Try telling Peter Davis, the former Director General of Ofwat, that the NAO/PA process lacks bite.

In the past week we have had a hard-hitting NAO report on the sale of the rolling stock companies and a very strong Public Accounts Committee report on the Child Support Agency. These hardly indicate a tendency to pull punches. DAVID DAVIS
Chairman, Committee of Public Accounts
House of Commons
London SW1

Nicotine patches

MILLY JENKINS ("Nothing's a patch on will power", 10 March) implies that pharmacists sell nicotine replacement products (NRT) as though all a smoker has to do is use them and they will automatically quit smoking.

The vast majority of pharmacists and their staff are fully aware that NRT is merely a tool – though a very powerful tool – to help people giving up. No tool – including NRT, hypnosis, acupuncture or smoking cessation clinics – will succeed unless the person has passed the stage

of "pre-contemplation" and are actually ready to give up.

Many pharmacists go much further than giving "minimal advice". Indeed it is in the pharmacists' interests to ensure that the person trying to give up gets as much support as possible. Every person who successfully quits will encourage others to try the same method. Many pharmacists provide successful smoking cessation advice in a variety of formats. One pharmacist in Belfast has had a 46 per cent success rate after six months with people who entered his programme. This programme has been developed and made available to all community pharmacists and is currently being piloted and evaluated in a number of health authorities, including Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster.

TONY CARSON
Community Pharmacy Facilitator
Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster Health Authority
London W2

First birds

YOUR science editor describes a turkey-sized creature with a long neck and a movable snout enabling it to open the mouth for large morsels of food ("Skull discovery shows that birds are descended from dinosaurs", 19 March). These, you claim, were "early birds". Whatever sort of worms did they catch?

PAMELA DONOHUE
Sheffield

Prisoner exchange

THERE IS a simple solution to the recent prison problems. Transfer all the inmates of Wormwood Scrubs to the Maze, and all the prisoners in the Maze to Wormwood Scrubs. Alternatively, leave the inmates where they are, and let the two prisons swap officers.

PETER REYNOLDS
Southport, Merseyside

Vatican whitewash

YOU WERE right to dismiss the Vatican statement on the Holocaust as "whitewash" (report, 17 March). Far from being an adequate "act of repentance" it is more of a tactical deflection of criticism of the Church as an institution by shifting the blame on to individuals.

In fact the opposite was often the case, with something of the credibility of the Church being salvaged by the exceptional heroism of individuals like Frans Jagerstatter in the face of overwhelming institutional indifference or hostility.

The Nazis drew widely upon the centuries-old prejudices which have been nurtured by the Church, such as the *Servitus Judaeorum* (the "perpetual servitude of the Jews" decreed by the 3rd Lateran Council) and the model of the religious crusading orders which the new "knights" of the SS were expected to emulate.

As with the previous denial of any responsibility by the Church for the genocide of American Indians during their enforced "Christianisation" or more recently the denial by the Church of responsibility for individual cases of clerical abuse, it is not only the act but the denial which is destructive. It induces a paralysis of confidence in the institution.

FR DOMINIC KIRKHAM
Manchester

Nothing to do with me

LEST SILENCE be taken as confirmation of the assertions in Tim Hulse's article "The subjects still object to Queen Camilla" (17 March), I should like to make it absolutely clear that I have not played "a major role" in influencing the discussions of the "Way Ahead group". I have had no involvement whatsoever in these deliberations; I know only as much about the work of the "Way Ahead group" as anyone else who follows coverage in your newspaper and others.

PETER MANDELSON
Minister without Portfolio
Cabinet Office
London SW1

And here is the news, read by a man with a calm, measured, statesmanlike voice

Only Ulster's own parties can break out of the maze



**DONALD
MACINTYRE**
THE NEGOTIATORS'
FINAL TASK

IN NORMAL times, or what passes for them in Northern Ireland, the depiction on BBC Radio by a prison officer of the frighteningly aberrant regime at the Maze might have created more of a sensation than it did. Even so, the problems of imposing order on a system which has claimed the lives of 29 prison officers in 25 years would be as daunting for this government as it was for the last. But these are not normal times: the prisoners of the Maze, both loyalist and republican, will be at once actors and subjects in the peace talks which resume in Belfast on Monday. Actors because they contain some of those who will need, on both sides of the divide, to be satisfied if Sinn Féin and the two paramilitary-linked loyalist parties are to acquiesce in a settlement. Subjects because their release, at least after any settlement, is bound to be an issue in the talks. In such circumstances any attempt suddenly to turn the Maze into a normal prison would, even supposing it were possible, threaten the peace process itself. The big picture, in short, does not allow such a course.

This is a deeply shocking fact. But no more shocking than some of the other calculated, rule-bending risks the Blair government has already taken in the quest for peace. The refusal to be hung up on demands for prior de-commissioning of IRA arms, Blair's willingness to meet Gerry Adams when circumstances require it, the return of Adams himself to the talks on Monday after the briefest of exclusions in response to two IRA murders, perhaps the non-extradition of Roisin McAliskey, certainly Mo Mowlam's own meeting with paramilitaries at the Maze itself, are all examples of what John Major didn't – and given his perilously slender Commons majority – probably couldn't, allow in his own dogged search for peace. Blair's temperament and parliamentary supremacy have been applied to kick away every removable and unnecessary obstacle to a settlement. And of course the end justifies the means. For the end, if it is reached, it is something very big indeed.

The rule-bending is anyway finite: there is a deadline. The talks will start with a new intensity on Monday because they are intended to finish by Easter – just three weeks away – with a date for a referendum pencilled in for 22 May. If ever there was a time for mainland Britons to shake themselves out of the numb mood of denial that characterises their view of Northern Ireland, it's now.

Government participants in the talks have already seen some interesting things: a role play in which Seamus Mallon, the SDLP's deputy leader, and Jeffrey Donaldson, the new young Ulster Unionist MP, were asked to swap positions and imagine aloud what the advantages of a lasting settlement would be for the other. Mallon's enumeration of the

benefits of knowing the status of Northern Ireland "could not change without the consent of its majority, of belonging to the biggest party in a new assembly, and of remaining in the United Kingdom, is said to have been a *tour de force*. Reg Impey, the Ulster Unionist co-ordinator, eloquently challenged Sinn Féin, during the London phase of the talks to admit it had never really tried to understand the hopes and fears of a million Unionists. There have been sharp exchanges on the nationalist side in which Mallon has invited Martin McGuinness to inhabit the real world and distinguish between what is achievable and what isn't. And while the UUP has so far steadfastly resisted Tony Blair's – and this week in Washington, Bill Clinton's – urgings to talk directly to Sinn Féin and not simply through the chair, there was even a moment when its deputy leader John Taylor was caught laughing at a McGuinness joke.

But while all this is engagement of a sort, it does not make a settlement. The outlines of that are well known: a Belfast assembly, cross-border bodies, a new form of British-Irish relationship and the abandonment of Dublin's constitutional claim to a 32-county republic. But so are the difficulties. Even supposing you can reach agreement on a strong assembly with a cabinet-style executive, how can a coalition that includes ministers from both Sinn Féin and Ian Paisley's DUP operate in practice? Should the executive require a majority way above 51 per cent for any decision to ensure power is genuinely shared? And even this pales behind the critical question of the cross-border bodies and whether they should be subservient to the assembly as the Unionists insist they should, or able to take binding decisions of their own as the nationalists want. These aren't intriguing little problems for a political science seminar: they have the real capacity to derail a settlement and plunge Northern Ireland back into darkness. And all this when David Trimble, the UUP leader, is hemmed in by rivals, inside and outside his party, who abhor the idea of any deal; and when Sinn Féin is already seeing defections to anti-settlement republicanism.

Blair nevertheless has assets. These include not only Mo Mowlam, the anti-politician's politician, who has proved to be the right woman at the right time, but also Paul Murphy, her own choice as political minister, and a shrewd, solid, Welshman, as patient as he is decent. They include, too, the real steel shown so far by David Trimble in withstanding the huge pressures on him to abort the talks. They include the support of Bertie Ahern, the Irish Taoiseach, whose nationalism is of a distinctly modernised form. And they include his own – as he himself has wryly suggested – "insane" – optimism that this business can be finished. There is every chance that as the deadline approaches Blair will enter the talks directly.

And Blair has one other asset: the grim consequences of failure. Most of the involved British ministers and officials – one of whom dares to put the chances of success at around 55-45 per cent – are convinced that Adams and McGuinness genuinely want a settlement. But even if they didn't, it could hardly be more obvious that Blair has taken every possible step to keep them in the process. Similarly on the Unionist side, Trimble's rivals and tormentors need to remember that Blair owes them nothing in the Commons, and the prospect of a return not only to war but to the hated Anglo-Irish agreement could be the bleak alternative. Blair has rightly thrown away the rule book in his impatient search for peace. And if the waters close over the parties this time, it's unlikely to be the Government which takes the blame.

If we are to live well, we must break the taboo of looking squarely at death

The BBC is being criticised for filming a patient dying of cancer, but, says Suzanne Moore, we can no longer turn away from reality



The plain fact of death: a necessary sight for the living

Photograph: Chris Watt

WE HAVE all seen a lot of death on TV. Grisly deaths, peaceful deaths, realistic deaths, ridiculous deaths, the dying uttering famous last words or going to the grave carrying the secret of the plot. If you are a fan of *ER* or *Casualty* or even *Hollyoaks* you will have seen countless scenes of medics sensitively telling bereaved relatives the news. Do you ever get used to it, you wonder, as the heroine of Martin Amis's new novel *Night Train* wonders. Does it ever become everyday?

In real life I have seen two people die which is more than some and a great deal less than many others. One was my mother and one was an unfortunate woman who died on the bus next to me in Oxford Street. "Give her a nudge, love," said the bus conductor when we got to the end of the route as the elderly woman next to me appeared to have nodded off. When she did not respond, the ambulance was called and I was shocked not just because someone had died peacefully while sitting next to me but by the necessary violence of the medical teams efforts to resuscitate her. There she was in public being thumped about. They tried for ages before they let her go. Perhaps I should have looked away but I felt somehow involved and because even with such a public death I knew that what was happening was way beyond my understanding.

Now a real-life death is to be shown on TV. In a major new BBC series called *The Human Body*, presented by the fertility expert Lord Winston, the last moments of a dying man will be shown. This is a taboo busting of the highest order. Real death, as opposed to the representation of death, is the final frontier for television. Both the *Daily Mail* and the *London Evening Standard* have run highly critical pieces about this. No one questions the credentials of the programme's presenter, Lord Winston, who, as a doctor, is acknowledged to have been highly sensitive in the way that this particular death was filmed. The dying man gave his permission, yet

what seems to upset most people is the very idea of filming death itself. But if we are truly worried about death for death's sake, about the inherent voyeurism in all of us, we would not watch the movies we do, we would not drag our kids around dungeons to see animatronic models of tortured and dying souls, we would not have been so excited about the possibility of pictures of a dying princess that were circulated at the time.

To say that death is a taboo subject is to say nothing new or even particularly interesting. To ask whether we should make it less taboo and how we may do so might be Lord Winston's argument is really one about education. He wrote in *The Times* of the film: "We are celebrating a special individual and if, in the process, we learn a little more about death itself, we augment his memory." Does seeing death make us understand it any more? No. I think it remains as mysterious as ever. We are not suddenly going to "come to terms", or any other banal phrase you care to use, with death by staring dying in the face – someone else's face. Yet our deliberate policy of making death invisible is clearly not satisfactory. The euphemisms, the hiding away of all evidence of death, the sanitised rituals surrounding it, result in increasing fear of death rather than an acceptance of it. The more modern and secular a culture becomes, the more terrifying death appears, for it

Watching my mother die did not teach me much about how to die, but a lot about how to live

ing to hurt her?" cried my then four year old who kept declaring proudly and loudly throughout the funeral: "I know who is in the box. It's my Nana".

Watching my mother die did not teach me much about how to die but a lot about how to live. The enormous relief that came over her face when I took her to a hospice remains with me. Everything changed from that moment on. As long as someone is in hospital it doesn't matter how terminal they are, there is some sort of pretence that things are not as bad as they really are. Successful pain management is supposedly available to NHS patients but I'm sorry to say I never saw it.

Once we reached the hospice not only was the pain controlled but the visibility of death, of what was actually happening, was present. Everyone had their own room and as much privacy as they wanted, yet the humanity and honesty of the staff meant that death was not simply a failure of medicine but the inevitable end of an intimate journey. It was accepted that the dying still wanted hairdressers, television and alcohol. Just like the living.

She had only the one: that she wasn't ready to go.

So I imagine her death was fairly average because death is fairly average. I didn't sell pictures of her dying in flog jumpers, as Bennetton did with their notorious picture of a man dying of Aids. I didn't use it in make multi-media art, as artists such as Bill Viola have done. I didn't publish pictures of it to end some kind of political injustice, like great photographers such as Don McCullin have done. I have exploited her death only by writing about it. Yet I am writing about it now because I saw it; and that, these days, is unusual. I have no desire to see anyone else die before my eyes. I may or may not watch the controversial programme in question but I want the right to.

To look at death makes us realise us that every death is a private and individual act, whether there are witnesses present or not. With the dying, seeing may not necessarily be believing – the common reaction to a corpse is always that they look exactly the same as before, yet there is something imperceptibly different. Yet, to understand the difference between death and life, sometimes one has to see it. Hiding death away does not cheat it. It deceives us into feeling that we might live for ever, rather than live as well as we can while we have the chance.

Loyalty, in politics and beyond, has become the lost virtue



**DAVID
AARONOVITCH**
ON THE END
OF TRUST

I IMAGINE Professor M A Leschiner to be a man in his mid-forties with a small beard, an unreliable temper and a penchant for bow-ties. But whatever his looks, he is certainly angry.

Two weeks ago in my local free-sheet, the *Camden New Journal*, the Professor wrote a furious letter denouncing the actions of the local Labour council as being "wholly incompatible with the concept and ethos of a caring, accountable and socially responsible/ responsive authority". The incident had strained his political loyalty. "Let it be known," he continued, "that I am (soon was?) a member and strong supporter of the Labour Party in national as well as local government." Let it be known, indeed.

But what was the occasion for this blast of outrage? The abandonment of socialism? Gross corruption? Not at all. It was something far closer to home. Professor Leschiner's cause for complaint was "two ill-gotten parking tick-

ets and an obscene charge for towing away my car, left parked legally with a clearly displayed resident's permit in a bay suspended at short notice". This, plus the subsequent unhelpfulness and discourtesy of the Labour council in returning the professor his money, had clearly strained his loyalty to the limit.

At which point one might ask, "What loyalty?" I don't know why the professor was attracted to Labour in the first place. But his motives may well have included such great abstracts as the pursuit of equity and social justice. Yet, here the professor has personally encountered a far-flung encompassment – an outpost – of real politics, touching his own life and it has been enough to alter his perceptions.

This seems odd to me, but then it would. For several years, I was a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, almost by inheritance. My parents were communists and so were many of their friends, who were also – as far as I could see – decent, brave people with an enhanced sense of personal morality and responsibility. Many of them had stuck with the party through the Cold War and the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, so they were unlikely to be put off by, say, Mr Krushchev's attitude towards parking in suspended bays.

But loyalty – to party and to fellow members – sometimes made them purblind. His invocation was an easy way for those at the top (or, indeed, just as often, those at the bottom) to avoid or stifle awkward debate. And it made sense, for if each individual scruple or difference were made the occasion of an open struggle, then the party could never survive. A choice had been made when taking out the party card.

That this form of loyalty is a feature

of an age now past was illustrated by the writer Henry Louis Gates in last week's *New Yorker*. He contrasted the behaviour of Nixon's secretary, Rose Mary Woods, who took the rap for erasing key Watergate tapes in the early Seventies – with that of former Clinton aides who, as the binboms erupted recently, put clear water between themselves and their former boss.

But the Clinton saga offers other perspectives on the conditional status of loyalty today. The behaviour of former White House aide Linda Tripp, in recording the confidences of the young Monica Lewinsky (including the use of what is now known as the "Tripp

One of the most wonderfully inappropriate (though effective) PR concepts of recent times is the supermarket 'loyalty' card

wire"), constitutes as remarkable a display of personal disloyalty as I can remember. Any consideration of the ethics of Ms Tripp – who may well be telling the truth – makes one salute the actions of the young Victoria Alken, who may have been prepared to perjure herself for her father. As ever, it is her dad that we should worry about.

Victoria apart, loyalty is now, in general terms, a much less attractive and fashionable commodity than once it was. Instead of existing for its own sake, it is increasingly subjected to a consumer-benefit test before it is tendered. Why should one accept anything or anyone "right or wrong"? What would be the advantage of declaring an allegiance and obstinately maintaining it?

Companies cannot complain about this. There is nothing more ironic than watching well-beeled executives turn round after years of downsizing and appeal to the loyalty of their remaining employees. Every sensible worker knows that if you have two good ideas, then you should give one of them to your current boss, and keep the other for your next job interview. Two decades of globalisation and we all understand that we are on our own.

So do the consumers themselves. One of the most wonderfully inappropriate (though effective) PR concepts of recent times is the supermarket "loyalty" card. The deal on the loyalty card

is this: if you spend more money with us, we'll make it cheaper for you. The "Mercenary Card" would be a more truthful name for this material transaction, which entirely lacks the human quality of sympathetic identification, of the abdication of self that the word loyalty implies. The loyalty card, then, is a lie.

Now, even one of the few areas to have escaped this cynicism, the passion for a particular football team, has found itself under assault. What can Newcastle United fans have made of the sneering comments about them and their glib support for the Magpies by the chairman and vice-chairman of the club they love? These same men, whose marketing equates loyalty with

the purchase of club goods, then deride the supporters for wasting their money on over-priced goods. However frantically the two men apologise, the fans now know what their loyalty bought them: contempt.

It is hardly surprising then, that political loyalty should also have suffered the attrition of cynicism. In Westminster and on the political talk-shows, the byword for New Labour sycophancy is the MP for Peterborough, Helen Brinton. Hers seems a horrid loyalty, with its use of the approved phrase, the courtier's attention to her master's phraseology and the repeated demand for loyalty for his own sake. This appears to us like the dark loyalty of a Speer, or a Molotov.

But I'm full of despair at the alternative, too. Step forward Bob Marshall-Andrews, also a new MP for Labour. Old Bob is not a loyalist; Bob is a character, a new Austin Mitchell now that we are tired of the old one. Bob is lionised in TV studios around Britain, for he can be relied upon to put the humorous boot into Blair. Not for Bob the awkward task of defending the unpopular, merely because his own party is implementing it. Interviewed about the Dome, for example, Bob tells us that he hopes so very much that it will be a success, but that he's terribly afraid that it will be a complete fiasco.

So, I do not love either of them. I understand the rush away from unqualified support; any ex-communist should. Yet, if you have chosen to support an idea or a movement or a person (and I hope that you will), your desertion at the first disagreement or pratfall merely strengthens the view that joining anything, supporting anything, is a waste of time. It is thus a victory for cynicism, not scepticism.

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Senior UBS executive quits as 'defection' claims surround his team

By Lea Paterson

A SENIOR executive with Swiss bank UBS has quit amid rumours he tried to defect to a rival bank with as many as 25 of his team.

TJ Lim, currently global head of fixed income, derivatives and foreign exchange at UBS, has "decided not to take up his designated position" as head of rates, derivatives and structured products at Warburg Dillon Read, the investment bank

formed by the merger of UBS and SBC, according to banking sources.

The derivatives chief has "no job lined up", according to one insider, and is likely to stay with UBS until the integration with SBC is complete at the end of June.

The resignation is the latest in a series of indications that senior executives at the two banks are uncomfortable with the merger process. Executives rumoured to be considering their positions include Hector

Sants, co-head of European equities, and Andy Siciliano, global head of rates and derivatives at SBC and Mr Lim's designated boss.

It is understood Mr Lim - thought to view his appointment at Warburg Dillon Read as a demotion - approached Dresdner Kleinwort Benson (DKB) last December. Mr Lim made a presentation to DKB executives, according to banking sources, and proposed that he and as many as 25 colleagues defect to the bank.

Mr Lim's discussions with DKB are understood to have ground to a halt after he made "excessive" wage demands. One source said: "What he was asking for in profit share was more than people at Dresdner were prepared to stand for."

Mr Lim is rumoured to have proposed that his team retain more than half of their profits.

SBC sources said reports that Mr Lim was summoned to Zurich at the weekend for a dressing down from

the board were inaccurate. One source said: "Yes, he went to Zurich. I believe he met Marcel Ospel [SBC's chief executive] but I understand the tone of the meeting was conciliatory... They were trying to find some common ground but unfortunately they were unable to."

News of Mr Lim's resignation came amid speculation about the future of Hector Sants, whose name has been linked with Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette (DLJ), the American bank.

An SBC spokesperson declined to comment on the rumour, saying Mr Sants was still with the bank.

Speculation has also surrounded the future of Andy Siciliano. Ironically, it is understood to be Mr Siciliano's appointment as global head of foreign exchange and fixed income that helped push Mr Lim - his junior - towards DKB.

SBC is believed to have offered Edson Mitchell, head of bonds at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, the job

of head of fixed income at Warburg Dillon Read. If Mr Mitchell had accepted the job, he would have assumed most of Mr Siciliano's responsibilities.

Mr Siciliano remains with SBC for the time being, but insiders have speculated that his departure is "purely a matter of time".

Banking sources have indicated that SBC is still considering hiring someone to take over Mr Siciliano's fixed income responsibilities.

Vauxhall's Luton plant saved after Blair intervenes

By Michael Harrison and Barrie Clement

GENERAL Motors last night backed down following the personal intervention of the Prime Minister and agreed to guarantee the long-term future of its Vauxhall car plant at Luton, safeguarding up to 30,000 jobs.

After a day of talks with trade unions, who were concerned about the serious threat to the plant, Vauxhall announced it would maintain all its UK operations well into the next millennium, provided they achieved world class productivity standards.

This means that the Luton plant will build the successor model to the Vectra, subject to agreement on a cost and productivity deal with the unions. GM has been contemplating building the car only at two plants on the Continent.

The climbdown follows intense pressure on General Motors from Tony Blair and Margaret Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade, to persuade the US car maker to honour its commitment to "build where it sells".

The Prime Minister is understood to have met management at Luton during a recent tour to promote the New Deal for the unemployed. Mrs Beckett had also been in contact with the company, even though the Government's room for manoeuvre was limited because the Luton plant, which employs 4,500 workers, is not in an area eligible for regional aid.

At a press conference yesterday morning to confirm that the Government will invest £25m in a new £160m van plant in Birmingham being built by LDV and Daewoo of Korea, Mrs Beckett went out of her way to urge a rethink by GM. "Our message to them today is clear. Everyone else is expressing their interest in Britain as an automotive workshop. Everyone else is saying this is a good base to do business and expand so obviously we hope GM will take these things into account in whatever decision they make."

Following yesterday's meeting with the unions, Nick Reilly, chairman of Vauxhall, said: "Today's meeting was the first step on the road to what I believe will be a strong and realistic agree-

ment for both sides. This will allow us to maintain all of Vauxhall's operations at world class standards of cost and productivity levels well into the next millennium."

The unions will meet Vauxhall management again in a week. They concede that it is now 30 per cent more expensive to build the Vectra at Luton than at other GM plants and the situation has become worse by the strength of sterling. The new Vectra, codenamed the Epsilon, will cost up to £1bn to develop and is due to appear on the roads in about four years. GM has already given a guarantee that one of the two plants chosen to build the car will be at Eisenach in eastern Germany. The selection of the other will be made in the next three months.

Before the meeting, Tony Woodley, chief union negotiator at the company, contended there could even be a question mark over the company's plant at Ellesmere Port on Merseyside which makes the Astra.

Mr Woodley, a national official at the Transport and General Workers' Union, said the more immediate threat overshadowed



Unions concede that it is now 30 per cent more expensive to build the Vectra (above) at Luton than at other GM plants

the Luton plant. He accused General Motors of engaging in "dirty deeds" in secret to ensure the future of the group's plants in Germany after unions agreed to job losses and wage cuts.

Britain is the only country in the European Union with a General Motors presence, which imports more of the company's cars than it exports. It was "completely unacceptable" that the

present "trade deficit" of £1.5bn would be increased to £1.8bn if Luton were closed.

Mr Woodley said that British unions might be prepared to negotiate new productivity deals

with the company, but management had not held out any prospect that the Luton plant might manufacture a replacement to the Vectra.

Outlook, page 25

Duty rise may force gaming underground

By Andrew Yates

THE GOVERNMENT's decision to raise gaming duty could drive gambling underground and promote illegal betting according to Capital Corporation, the London casino operator. The group also claimed yesterday the tax rise would prove a devastating blow for the British casino industry, and would prompt it to look at investing overseas rather than at home.

The surprise hike in duty by Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, has forced Capital to halve its final dividend payment in 3p a share to help pay for a huge rise in its tax bill.

Capital forecasts the rise in the top rate of gaming duty to 40 per cent would have cost it almost £5m last year and could have an even bigger impact on profits in 1998.

Alan Hearn, the group's chief executive, lambasted the Government's decision. "This is a very poor, ill-thought out measure. This is going to hit our shareholders."

Capital is now calling on the Government to reverse its plans. It is also considering taking up the matter with the European Court. "We will appeal to every-

body we can," said Ernest Sharp, chairman of Capital.

Capital said it was still pursuing legal action against Kenneth Thompson and Des Pereira - the group's former chief executive and finance director respectively - over allegations that they have conspired to injure the company. The litigation follows the publication of a series of damaging reports about Capital over alleged lapses in security which rocked the group.

"The wheels of the law grind slowly. However, we are very confident that we will win the case," Mr Sharp said.

Capital claimed to have drawn a line under its former problems and that it had implemented tight cost controls which had contributed to the rise in profits.

Underlying 1997 profits rose by one-third to £16.4m. It was forced to spend £4m of that on advisors fees to see off a hostile bid from London Clubs. The economic turmoil in the Far East where many of the group's gamblers come from, has also taken its toll on attendances.

The number of Asian visitors to Capital's casinos have fallen by a quarter.

FTSE 100 nudges nearer to landmark 6,000 level

By Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

THE FTSE-100 index surged to within a whisker of the 6,000 level, the post-Budget euphoria in the stock market undimmed by concerns about the effect of the strong pound on industry. The index ended 94 points higher at 5,997.9.

The pound remained close to the nine-year high it touched earlier in the week, even though new economic figures yesterday added weight to the growing evidence that the economy is slowing down. The sterling index ended at 107.3, down just 0.2.

The debate about whether

higher interest rates were needed or justified, in the light of the strong pound, raged again yesterday.

William Butler, one of the more hawkish members of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee, said the tight jobs market still posed a risk to meeting the inflation target. "Earnings growth is key," he said.

He supported the claim by Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that the Government's fiscal policy was tight enough after the Budget, saying it had made a "significant contribution" to dampening the economy. Professor Butler said he favoured an early interest rate rise, rather than the "wait and

see" approach. "By postponing, in a situation where it seems likely that a rate increase of some kind is necessary, you do get upward pressure on sterling in anticipation," he said.

The Chancellor repeated his warning that the outlook for the economy depends on wage settlements. He said he sympathised with manufacturers about the high exchange rate but added: "At the same time they have to watch their wage rises. Manufacturing wage rises have been higher than in other parts of the economy."

The Engineering Employers' Federation, however, reported a slight downturn in pay deals, from 3.5 per cent to 3.4 per cent

in the latest three months. The EEF said this vindicated its call for no further interest rate increases.

The Office for National Statistics pointed out that the duty increases in the Budgets in July and earlier this week would themselves increase the measured inflation rate. It estimated the net effect would be to add about a quarter of a percentage point to the inflation rate by January 1999, although the timing would depend on how quickly retailers passed on the higher duties to consumers.

Other statistics yesterday showed the growth in the broad money measure, M4, slowing

into single digits for the first time since the end of 1996. Its annual growth rate was 9.7 per cent in February.

Separately, the high street banks and building societies reported weaker figures for mortgage lending in February.

Adrian Coles, director general of the Building Societies Association, said: "The traditional spring pick-up has come early to the housing market." The recovery was modest and sustainable, he said.

But adding to together the bank and building society lending showed new advances amounting to £1.5bn, around the same as January's figure.

Builders' rate fear, page 28

Morrison to create 2,400 jobs in superstore openings

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

WILLIAM Morrison, the Bradford-based supermarket group, yesterday announced plans to create 2,400 jobs next year as part of a programme to open seven new superstores. The jobs are in addition to the 2,000 that will be added in five new stores this year.

The news came as Ken Morrison, the group's chairman,

pledged that the company would remain independent in spite of the move towards consolidation in the supermarket sector.

Mr Morrison, whose family controls 40 per cent of the £2bn company, said he had no plans to sell up. "We feel very strong and if we go for growth in the normal organic way we can carry on as we have done for the last 20 or 30 years. We have had no serious ap-

proaches. We believe in independence."

He conceded that the market was becoming more competitive and that the merger of Somerfield and Kwik Save would make it even more so.

But he said Morrison could succeed with quality stores and value for money with its Price Mission campaign, which guarantees 1,000 products on special offer every week.

Mr Morrison was speaking as

the group announced an 11.5 per cent increase in full year profits to £151.5m. Like-for-like sales in the six weeks since February were 3.1 per cent ahead of the same period last year.

Mr Morrison credited the success to a philosophy of keeping it simple. "We maintain low prices and reward customers that way. We don't have a loyalty card and we don't plan one," he said.

The new stores next year will

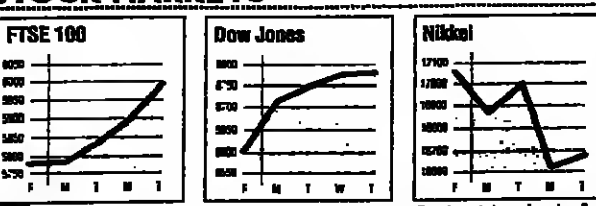
include branches in Norwich, Leitchworth and Killingsworth.

This year's openings will include Halfway in Sheffield, and its first store in the south of England in Erit, Kent in October. The group currently has 85 superstores.

Group sales rose 5.6 per cent to £2.3bn. The dividend was raised 23.5 per cent to 2.1p. Morrison shares rose 16.5p to 256.5p.

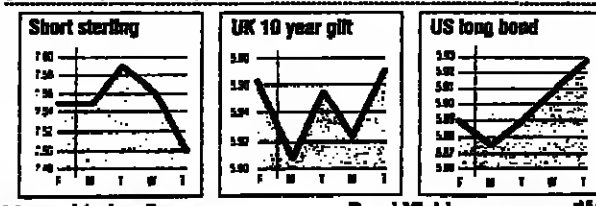
Investment column, page 26

STOCK MARKETS



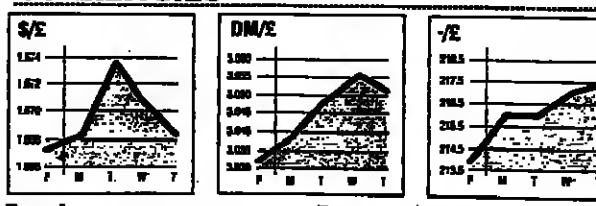
Indices	Close	Change	Change%	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield%
FTSE 100	5997.90	94.30	1.60	5903.60	4188.10	3.22
FTSE 250	5486.40	41.50	0.77	5425.00	4894.20	2.83
FTSE 350	2872.30	40.80	1.45	2851.40	2078.70	3.16
FTSE All Share	2792.25	38.34	1.39	2758.95	2058.07	3.13
FTSE Smallcap	2280.40	14.80	0.58	2275.60	2182.10	2.71
FTSE Midcap	1400.10	4.20	0.30	1395.90	1225.20	3.10
FTSE AIM	1046.90	-0.10	-0.01	1114.30	965.90	1.04
Dow Jones	8771.66	-1.74	-0.02	8780.13	6356.78	1.69
Nikkei	16879.02	59.34	0.36	16810.79	14488.21	0.91
Hang Seng	11445.04	323.39	2.91	11820.31	7908.13	3.37
Dax	4936.22	16.80	0.34	4948.66	3192.35	1.59

INTEREST RATES



Money Market Rates	3 month	6 month	1 year	1 yr 10 year	1 yr 10 year	1 yr 10 year
UK	7.50	1.25	7.50	6.50	5.50	1.85
US	5.50	0.00	5.75	0.34	5.50	1.06
Japan	0.70	0.11	0.60	-0.02	1.77	0.68
Germany	3.51	0.24	3.74	0.30	4.91	-0.99
Bond Yields	10 year	1 yr 10 year	1 yr 10 year	1 yr 10 year	1 yr 10 year	1 yr 10 year
UK	7.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50
US	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50
Japan	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70
Germany	3.51	3.51	3.51	3.51	3.51	3.51
Main Price Changes	Price	Change	% Change	Price	Change	% Change
St James Place	283.50	51.50	22.20	283.50	51.50	22.20
Kwik Fit	511.00	79.00	15.20	511.00	79.00	15.20
Demeris	143.00	18.00	12.60	143.00	18.00	12.60
Milagro	2737.50	142.50	4.77	2737.50	142.50	4.77
Alfred Domest	560.00	24.50	4.19	560.00	24.50	4.19

CURRENCIES



Found	at 10am	Change	1 yr Ago	at 10am	Change	1 yr Ago
Dollar	1.6682	-0.02	1.5972	Swiss	0.5884	-0.11
D-Mark	3.0515	-0.07	2.6677	D-Mark	1.8301	-0.04
Yen	217.43	0.05	196.06	Yen	130.35	-0.18
£ Index	107.50	0.00	96.30	£ Index	108.40	0.00
OTHER INDICATORS	at 10am	Change	1 yr Ago	at 10am	Change	1 yr Ago
Oil (\$)	12.21	0.18	18.54	GDP	114.10	2.50
Gold (\$)	291.70	0.15	352.00	BPI	120.30	3.40
Silver (\$)	5.85	0.04	5.17	Base Rates	7.25	0.00

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.4227	Italy (lira)	2.923
Austria (schillings)	20.77	Japan (yen)	214.09
Belgium (francs)	60.98	Malta (lira)	0.6390
Canada (\$)	2.3040	Netherlands (guilders)	3.2299
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8597	Norway (kroner)	12.38
Denmark (kroner)	11.34	Portugal (escudos)	209.63
Finland (markka)	9.0349	Spain (pesetas)	250.48
France (francs)	9.9449	South Africa (rand)	7.9161
Germany (marks)	2.9669	Sweden (kroner)	12.93
Greece (drachmas)	339.48	Switzerland (francs)	2.4227
Hong Kong (\$)	12.52	Turkey (lira)	380.730
Ireland (pounds)	1.069	USA (\$)	1.6282

Source: Thomas Cook
Rates for indication purposes only

سكربت الامل

Blair drives a hard bargain with General Motors



OUTLOOK

In the absence of a carrot, Tony Blair decided to follow the advice of Roosevelt and speak softly but carry a big stick. General Motors' pledge last night to maintain operations at its Vauxhall plant in Luton, provided world-class standards of productivity are met, is a victory for the discreet diplomacy of the Prime Minister and Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade.

Luton is not in an area of the country that qualifies for regional selective assistance. Mr Blair therefore could not tempt Vauxhall to build the successor to the Vectra (the uninspiringly named Epsilon) at the plant with the promise of a fat government subsidy.

Instead he appears to have appealed to the company's better nature and persuaded it that what is good for Luton is good for GM too. It is only possible to speculate on what deals have been cut in smoke-filled rooms, what arm twisting went on behind closed doors. But the fact is that multi-national companies are always keen to present themselves as good citizens in whichever country they manufacture.

Governments can make life particularly unpleasant for car makers. It is a moot point whether Vauxhall would have been allowed to retain its designation as a British car maker - still an important consideration for many

fleet buyers - if it had closed Luton down, and watch its balance of trade slip even further into the red as it imported yet more cars.

However, all good agreements are ones that allow both sides to claim victory. To be assured of the Vectra replacement, Luton will have to close the 30 per cent cost gap with its Continental rivals at some speed. It is a tall order but the Japanese have shown it can be done. Mr Blair may turn out not to be the only one with a big stick.

Gartmore goes for indexation

The big active fund management groups have had a rough time of it lately. Try as they might, they keep on underperforming the index. Given that active fund management costs a good deal more than having someone track the index for you, this seems a pretty run deal. Many trustees have come to wonder why they are employing these people. Gartmore Investment Management, one of the big four, yesterday came up with a wizzard wheeze to help stop the rot - er, rather than you having to go to the bother of moving to an indexed fund, they'll index

your money for you. That way you can be guaranteed not to underperform.

To be fair, it's not quite as simple or silly as that. Gartmore plans to offer a mix of passive and active management within its core balanced fund product. A large slug of the money, in some cases the larger part of it, will be passively managed to satisfy accelerating demand from trustees for indemnation. But the rest will be actively managed within "conviction" portfolios that target higher returns. According to Gartmore, this will help clients establish the right balance between risk and reward.

It hardly needs pointing out that the idea won't necessarily solve the problem. If Gartmore continues to underperform in active management, then the balanced funds will underperform as well, albeit not by as much. Furthermore, if this is what trustees really want, what's to stop them dividing up the money themselves between active and passive managers? Actually this is what larger pension funds do already. Unfortunately it's generally not cost effective for smaller funds. So Gartmore is probably correct in believing there could be demand for this kind of product. Certainly a number of leading actuaries have been talking recently about the need for precisely this kind of thing.

All the same, the initiative does rather seem indicative of a general dumbing down of fund management. If you can't beat 'em, join 'em, seems to be the attitude of a growing number of active fund managers. Never mind the reality of induration. Fear of it is driving fund managers into the index in growing numbers too, feeding its upward march, and making it more difficult still for the active managers to keep up.

Dangers of overly vigilant regulation

Don Cruikshank seems determined to go out all guns blazing, doesn't he? This is his final month as Director General of Ofcom and for a regulator who's already said there won't be any need to control telecom prices soon after the turn of the century, he's certainly packing it in. First he dispatched the mobile phone companies to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Now he's suggesting that Ofcom is recreated as the Electronic Communications Commission, swallowing a large chunk of the Independent Television Commission's functions in the process.

There's obviously some logic in the proposal. The model is the Federal Communications Commission, which has long been responsible for economic regulation of both broadcasting and telecommunications in the US. As the lines between traditional broadcast TV, cable, new media and telecommunications become more and more blurred, the opportunity for and complexity of anti-competitive practice is bound to grow. The FTC, which was set up to regulate a limited number of publicly franchised TV monopolies, is plainly not appropriate to the task in the modern world and Mr Cruickshank is right to suggest its activities be confined to content and quality.

However, if it is logical to absorb large parts of the ITC into Ofcom, would it not also be equally logical to absorb Ofcom into the soon-to-be created Competition Authority. Mr. Crisdoth's answer seems to be that electronic communications is too specialised a field, as well as too essential a utility, to be left to the wider competition authorities. He may be right, but there are dangers as well as advantages in having a busybody specialist regulator digging around in emerging industries and technologies. Overly vigilant regulators can sometimes be more harmful to advances than a dominant monopoly supplier.

US trade gap with troubled Asian economies balloons

THE US trade deficit with the troubled economies of Southeast Asia ballooned in January, the Commerce Department said yesterday. The shortfall between American exports to and imports from Indonesia leapt by 121 per cent to \$538m (\$326m), and the gap with South Korea by 151 per cent to \$856m. The news that the politically sensitive bilateral deficit with Japan actually shrank by 15 per cent to \$4.36bn could not distract attention from a record headline figure of \$12.04bn for the monthly deficit on trade in goods and services.

Analysts said the weaker trade position would eat into the US economy's growth in the first quarter of this year. Other figures yesterday suggested that growth remained fast enough to raise inflationary pressure. There was a surprise increase of 0.3 per cent in the "core" consumer price index, although lower oil prices held the headline increase to 0.1 per cent. Real earnings jumped by 0.9 per cent in February following a similar increase in January.

Irish Life on the lookout

IRISH LIFE, Ireland's largest insurer, which reported a rise of 21 per cent in 1997 operating profit yesterday, said it was seeking to broaden its penetration in the Irish market but could not rely on the right acquisitions coming on stream. "We want to broaden and deepen our options in the Irish financial services market," David Kingston, chief executive, said. "It would be nice to accelerate the process through a suitable acquisition but you cannot rely on that."

Hanson property sell-off

HANSON, the building materials and equipment group, has sold its surplus UK property interests to O&H Holdings, the privately owned property and construction group, for £25m. The sale of 300 freehold properties completes Hanson's £86m disposal of 000-operational UK property interests, the company said in a statement.

Cobham cautious on planes

COBHAM, the aerospace components and defence group, yesterday warned aircraft manufacturers of the dangers of stepping up production rates to unrealistic levels in the light of the Asia crisis and said it was "monitoring events very closely" in the region. Cobham, which manufactures a range of component systems for civil aviation plane makers, said it had experienced some weakness in demand from the Asian markets, but that, so far, its main Airbus order book had remained unaffected by the current turmoil in the region. The group yesterday posted a 19.7 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £52.3m, in line with analysts' expectations. The total dividend is being raised to 13.25p from 11.3p.

Cattles keeps up growth

CATTLES, the financial services group, yesterday said it would maintain its growth record of 15-20 per cent for earnings and profits and hoped to increase this to 20-25 per cent growth in three to five years time. The group, which specialises in door-to-door collected credit but has been widening its services in recent years to other areas, reported a 17 per cent rise in pre-tax profits for 1997 to £39.6m, up from £33.9m the previous year. Eddie Cran, chief executive, said the group now had a record of 16 years of unbroken profit increases.

Toad buys car audio firm

TOAD, the car security firm, plans to buy a firm called **Sextons** for £10m payable in cash and shares. It intends to fund the purchase through a placing and open offer of 25.5 million shares at 25p per share to raise £5.6m. Sextons is a distributor and installer of car audio and cellular telephone equipment and car security systems.

COMPANY RESULTS				
	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
AMES (F)	2,77m (2,78m)	68.4m (27.2m)	16.5p (4.7p)	5.0p (4.0p)
Charles Baynes (F)	238.5m (218.4m)	31.1m (22.5m)	9.34p (8.36p)	3.2p (2.8p)
Clayton (F)	206.5m (128.3m)	31.1m (26.9m)	44.3p (31.4p)	10.0p (7.4p)
Barclay (F)	61.7m (38.9m)	21.7m (18.1m)	4.57p (3.9p)	2.3p
Capital Corp (F)	38.3m (43.5m)	53.7m (64.8m)	7.86p (44.0p)	5.13p (8.15p)
Comise (F)	375.3m (333.2m)	17.8m (8.31m)	10.0m (15.0p)	8.83p (4.8p)
Cynophant (F)	20.55m (17.44m)	52.3m (37.7p)	88.3p (32.6p)	13.3p (11.3p)
Cobham (F)	322.9m (368.6m)	52.3m (38.4m)	26.4p (4.0p)	15.3p (16.3p)
Coventry Institute (F)	911.3m (1007m)	28.4m (4.3m)	46.9p (<3.9p)	17.7p (16.3p)
Emas Holdings (F)	- (-)	1.41m (8.75m)	18.3p (17.0p)	3.5p (2.3p)
First Earth (F)	11.29m (8.17m)	1.41m (8.75m)	15.0p (14.1p)	3.2p (2.5p)
James Fisher (F)	62.29m (57.9m)	8.31m (6.05p)	24.8p (16.2p)	10.0p (8.4p)
Gwent (F)	458.5m (407.5m)	24.4m (2.1m)	15.1p (17.3p)	6.0p (5.7p)
Holt (F)	203.1m (146.9m)	2.41m (2.94m)	7.8p (8.0p)	1.7p (1.8p)
Jayr Brown (F)	106.5m (112.9m)	2.21m (2.94m)	45.9p (15.9p)	nil
Johnson (F)	18.7m (12.4m)	2.36m (4.5m)	22.3p (17.2p)	6.5p (5.9p)
K&N-FC (F)	472.2m (426.9m)	35.1m (43.5m)	8.25p (4.85p)	nil
M&S (F)	113.4m (111m)	7.22m (1.83m)	9.04p (8.25p)	1.7p
Metropolitan Group (F)	5.58m (5.77m)	1.29m (1.83m)	12.65p (11.01p)	2.1p (1.7p)
Westons (F)	2.25m (2.17m)	151.4m (148.5m)	2.53p (3.49p)	nil
Woolworths (F)	0.005m (2.35m)	2.75m (1.65m)	4.83p (8.0p)	9.5p (8.1p)
Woolworths (F)	1.135m (80.29m)	31.8m (18.0p)	4.76p (3.95p)	3.3p (3.3p)
Woolworths (F)	48.55m (47.2m)	2.55m (1.74m)	12.4p (12.4p)	3.6p (6.1p)
Woolworths (F)	1.27m (1.93m)	6.97m (1.74m)	21.7p (14.1p)	10.0p (11.0p)
Woolworths (F)	49.73m (43.4m)	37.8p (36.8m)	33.8p (36.8p)	11.8p (11.8p)
Woolworths (F)	355.9m (516.1m)	48.7m (56.2m)	31.8p (36.8p)	13.2p (11.8p)
Woolworths (F)	324.8m (303.3m)	14.1m (56.2m)	9.81p (3.95p)	4.35p (4.72p)
Woolworths (F)	96.4m (88.2m)	13.3m (16.0m)		

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Cazenove and Schroders rapped over AEA float

By Michael Harrison

CAZENOVE and Schroders were sharply criticised yesterday by the public spending watchdog, the National Audit Office, for their role in advising on the £238m sale of AEA Technology, which has more than doubled in value since privatisation 18 months ago.

Shares in the company, the commercial arm of the UK Atomic Energy Authority, soared to a 15 per cent premium on their first day of trading in September, 1996.

Since then the shares have risen from an issue price of 280p to 622.5p, valuing AEA Technology at £566m.

The NAO criticised Cazenove, the Department of Trade and Industry's brokers, for failing to test demand for the shares at prices higher than 280p, pointing out that an increase of just 10p in the offer price would have raised the sale proceeds by £8m.

The NAO's report also reveals that three Cazenove companies were among the institutions to which it allocated a total of 68 million shares.

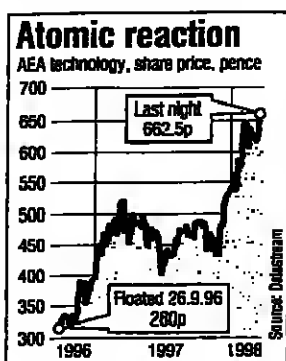
The DTI's failure to oversee the allocation of these shares was criticised by the NAO.

However, it added that there was no evidence that Cazenove had unduly favoured any institutions, including its own companies, in the allocation process.

Schroders, the department's financial adviser, was criticised over the £1.8m success fee it received following the sale. The size of the fee was linked to the extent that the sale proceeds exceeded Schroders' own estimate of the likely receipts.

However, there was no independent review of the methodology and assumptions made by Schroders.

The NAO also says that privatisation proceeds were even lower than the £228m achieved, since some of the £121m of restructuring charges incurred by the Government



before the flotation should reasonably be regarded as sale costs.

The chief executive of AEA technology is Dr Peter Watson, who was also the chairman of the train leasing company Porterbrook and made a £3m profit on his shares when the company was bought by Stagecoach. That sale was savagely criticised by the NAO in a report last week.

Total costs of advisers on the AEA flotation came to £8.134m. In addition to its success fee, Schroders received a basic fee of £560,000 while Cazenove received £2.32m.

In its recommendations, the NAO said that in future the Government should consider the case for phasing sales - the flotation of AEA Technology involved 100 per cent of the shares.

It also said that when relying on prior soundings taken in the market, the process should be conducted rigorously so as to give a good indication of the likely demand and at different prices.

Although Cazenove increased the price range from 240-270p to 250-280p, there had to be significant scaling back of allocations after the issue was heavily oversubscribed.

Swallowfield chairman in a lather about factory improvements



A MAKEOVER of its production facilities will help Swallowfield increase capacity for its cosmetic and skin care products, the toiletries company said yesterday as it unveiled a 5 per cent rise in annual profits. The company made a pre-tax profit of £3.7 million in 1997, compared with £3.5m in the previous year. The dividend will be raised 10 per cent to 8p a share. Bill Odey, Swallowfield chairman

(pictured above getting a shave), said the company was well advanced on factory improvements. "We are optimistic that in 1998 we will maintain the organic growth in both turnover and profits reported over the last five years and our management team continues to use its knowledge and experience to maintain our core skills and expertise," he said.

Photograph: Daniel Newman

Telewest set to name digital partners

TELEWEST Communications, Britain's second largest cable group, said yesterday it expected to name its chosen partners to offer digital services in April.

"It is likely to be one company as far as end-to-end hardware is concerned but different companies in terms of operating systems and ... conditional access," Stephen Davidson, the chief executive, said.

His comments came as the group said its annual pre-tax losses had widened to £309.9m from £250.0m but added that 1997 was a turning point.

Telewest said it believed pre-tax losses had peaked and that it was embarking on a steady path towards profit. Mr Davidson said he agreed with some analyst forecasts that the company had seen the heaviest of its losses.

He added that analyst projections that the group would break-even around 2002 were "ones we would agree with".

"It has been a year of enormous achievement. We generally see 1997 as a turning point. Strategic steps we said we would put in place we have put in place ... and 1998 has got off to a cracking start," he said.

Telewest, which saw earnings before interest, depreciation, tax and amortisation rise to £49.6m from £0.5m, declined to divulge the penetration targets it would have to meet to hit market projections. And the company, which reported key operating statistics in January, also declined to shed light on how merger talks were going.

With no statement announcing that negotiations are off, Telewest remains officially in bid talks with the Nasdaq-listed cable group NTL. It has also been on the receiving end of interest from one of its main shareholders - US West Communications Group - which has said it is considering raising its 26.53 per cent stake.

Reuter

National Express makes £20m profit on five rail franchises

By Michael Harrison

NATIONAL Express, the country's biggest train operator, made profits from every one of its five passenger rail franchises last year after receiving £500m in subsidies from the Government.

The transport group said yesterday that all its train operations beat their financial targets, achieving operating profits before restructuring charges of just under £20m. National Ex-

press will receive a total of £2.8bn in subsidies over the life of the five franchises - Gatwick Express, ScotRail, Midland Main Line, Central Trains and Silverline, formerly known as North London Railways.

The company also pointed out it was spending £240m on new rolling stock, and in the case of ScotRail and Central Trains investment levels were above those set out in its franchise agreements.

The improved financial performance came on the back of a 6-9 per cent rise in passenger numbers and increased levels of reliability and punctuality.

Phil White, chief executive of National Express, said standards of service had outperformed pre-privatisation levels and, in some cases, also the requirements laid down in its franchise agreements.

National Express, a founder shareholder in London & Con-

tinental Railways, confirmed that it had submitted an "indicative bid" in partnership with British Airways to take over the Eurostar train service.

The group expects John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister, to grant a further 30-day extension to LCR to assemble financing plans for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link when its current extension runs out at the end of this month.

National Express and BA are examining two options. One is to take over the Eurostar service between London, Paris and Brussels on a franchise basis, which would entail the Government providing subsidies in the early years to cover operating losses. Eurostar losses are currently running at £180m a year.

The other option would be for the Government to contract out the operation of the service, in which case the two companies would be paid a management fee.

Colin Child, National Express finance director, said he did not believe it would be tainted by its involvement with LCR, which pulled out of its agreement to build the rail link in February after being refused a further £12m in subsidies.

He also said the two companies would address any competition problems that might arise because of BA's already dominant position in the air market between London, Paris and Brussels.

The group's results for 1997 were hit by a £10.8m provision against its investment in LCR. This helped lower pre-tax profits from £60.1m in 1996 to £54.8m.

There were a further £17.5m of charges to cover restructuring costs, mainly in its rail franchises where staffing levels fell by 700. A further 350 jobs will be shed in the rail division this year.

Bulmer may sue Matthew Clark over new-look cider

By Andrew Yates

BRITAIN'S two biggest cider makers could become embroiled in a legal battle over best-selling brands. HP Bulmer, the market leader, is considering suing Matthew Clark over its arch-rival's new look Dry Blackthorn brand. It is concerned that Dry Blackthorn now bears close resemblance to Strongbow, its own best-selling cider.

Matthew Clark is relaunching Blackthorn this week, backed by a £7m advertising campaign. The new bottles and cans of cider have a motif in the shape of a gold arrow on a black background. Bulmer already uses an arrow symbol on a black background on its Strongbow pack-

aging. Strongbow, like Blackthorn, is the subject of a high profile marketing drive which will see the two companies come head to head with each in the battle for a bigger slice of the troubled cider market.

A spokeswoman for Bulmer's said yesterday: "No legal action is being taken at the moment and we are in discussions with Matthew Clark." However the group did not rule out taking legal action in the future.

Matthew Clark denied the two parties were holding detailed discussions. "We remain totally confident in our [Dry Blackthorn's] integrity," said a spokesman for the group. "Of course we will respond vigorously if claims of this kind are



Clash of symbols: Rival cider brands both use an arrow

made. One phone call was made by Matthew Clark to Bulmer this morning [Thursday] but they did not commit themselves and said they would look at the situation."

Strongbow and Dry Black-

thorn are the most popular cider brands in the UK and their future success is vital to the financial fortunes of both groups. Competition in the cider market has intensified in recent years following a sharp fall in sales.

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

Morrison is back on track

FOR A business that is a perennial takeover favourite, Wm Morrison is actually doing rather well. After a fallow period a couple of years ago when growth seemed to have stalled, the business has re-started its store opening programme, invested in refurbishments and spent money in distribution and other areas like a new packaging centre.

The results have been impressive as yesterday's 11.5 per cent increase in full-year profits to £151.4m confirms. The company has now increased sales and profits for 30 consecutive years and this is all the more impressive as it is one of the so-called second-tier supermarkets that one might suspect is under increased pressure from the major players.

With that pressure increasing due to consolidation in the sector, many have expected the Bradford-based Morrison to succumb to an approach from one of the leading supermarket chains such as Sainsbury's which has not got a strong presence in the north.

But with the Morrison family owning 40 per cent of the shares any deal would need to be friendly and chairman Ken Morrison seems in no mood to sell.

Looking at the company's record, it is not hard to see why. The shares rose 16.5p to a new high of 256.5p yesterday compared to a 149.5p a year ago.

Like Asda, it prides itself on keeping things simple. It has no loyalty card and concentrates on keeping prices low.

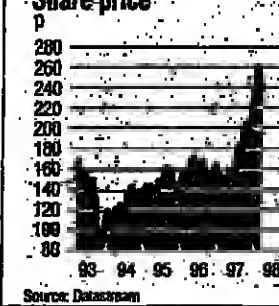
Though little known in the south east, Morrisons is a very strong brand in Yorkshire and other areas in the

William Morrison Supermarkets: At a glance

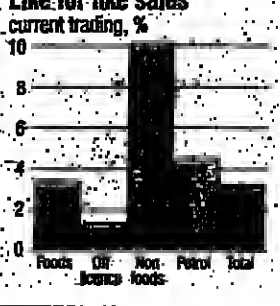
Market value: £1.9bn, share price 256.5p (+16.5p)

Five-year record	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Turnover (£m)	1.5	1.8	2.1	2.2	2.3
Pre-tax profits (£m)	97.8	116.1	127.1	135.8	151.4
Earnings per share (p)	8.6	9.9	10.7	11.0	12.5
Dividends per share (p)	1.0	1.2	1.4	1.7	2.1

Share price



Like for like sales



north where it is successfully battling against Asda. Like-for-like sales were up by 3.1 per cent in the first six weeks of the year.

This is hardly startling but the group is also hoping to improve the gross margin through improvements to the distribution network.

On NatWest Securities' forecast of £165m the shares trade on a forward p/e of 19. That seems too high to chase for now. Hold.

St James Place reaps rewards

SIR MARK Weinberg did not do any favours for private investors when a committee he chaired effectively barred them from getting involved in the majority of new issues. But it is a different story at St James Place Capital, his upmarket life insurance group, which has rewarded shareholders, both large and small, handsomely over the last few years.

St James Place Capital is essentially a holding company for J Rothschild Assurance

Group. The group has a two pronged strategy. First, it hires experienced sales people to pitch to rich clients. Total new business rose by 26 per cent to £109.3m in 1997, well ahead of the competition.

Second, JRA holds a 23 per cent stake in the "culture fund" life insurer, LAHC. The company takes advantage of consolidation in the life sector by buying ailing life insurers, closing them to new business and stripping out costs. In February, LAHC bought GAN (UK), a business with £2.8bn under management, which should add substantially to this year's earnings.

Positive results saw the shares jump by 22 per cent to 283.5p. However it is not just strong trading that has prompted the strong share price performance. Prudential, which has boosted its stake to nearly 30 per cent, is seen as a likely suitor.

However, a bid is far from certain. Sir Mark believes a takeover could damage JRA's business, where sales people are productive precisely because they are independent.

St James Place reported profits of £51.8m, or earnings per share of 8.6p. Stripping out the earnings from LAHC,

Kleinwort Benson forecasts earnings next year of 11.2p, putting the group on a forward multiple of over 25, against around 20 for the sector. Now would be a good time to take some profits.

Kwik-Fit finds new markets

KWIK-FIT's pledge to give "100 per cent customer delight" has also been applied to its shareholders. Under the astute leadership of Tom Farmer, the group's irreplaceable chairman and chief executive, its shares have outperformed the market by more than 85 per cent over the last five years.

There was never any doubt that Kwik-Fit was a master of fitting new tyres or fixing dodgy exhausts. There was a nagging worry, however, that it would struggle to continue to grow so rapidly as its chain of centres reached saturation point in the UK.

But Kwik-Fit has shown it can use its brand name to tap into new markets. Its motor insurance has taken off in a big way. The group has been able to use its captive customers to peddle new policies and sales are expanding apace. That could just be the beginning. Kwik-Fit believes it can eventually supply any service related to motoring. And expansion into Continental Europe is continuing apace.

The shares leapt 79p to 511p yesterday as the group announced that pre-tax profits motored ahead 27 per cent to £55m in 1997, smashing City forecasts. Analysts have upgraded current year profits to around £63m, putting the shares on prospective p/e ratio of more than 20. After such a sharp rise Kwik-Fit shares are not cheap and insurance profits are still unpredictable. However the shares are a solid long term hold.

THE OVERSEAS INVESTMENT TRUST PLC

(INCORPORATED IN ENGLAND AND WALES WITH REGISTERED NO. 544419)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the register of members of the Company will be closed from the close of business on Friday, 27 March 1998 to Monday, 30 March 1998 (inclusive).

NOTICE IS ALSO HEREBY GIVEN that the register of holders of warrants of the Company will be closed from the close of business on Friday, 27 March 1998 and will not re-open if the proposals contained in the circular to shareholders and warrant holders dated 6 March 1998 are approved by shareholders and warrant holders.

Registered office: 21 Finsbury Circus, London EC2M 1NB
By Order of the Board
P A Hogwood, Secretary
Dated: 20 March 1998

GUS ready to resist US legal challenge to Metromail bid

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

GREAT UNIVERSAL Stores yesterday pledged to fight the lawsuit filed against it by a US company which is seeking to break up GUS's £500m bid for Metromail, an American database group.

GUS, which is already embroiled in a £1.6bn hostile bid for Argos, said it noted the action initiated on Wednesday by American Business Information and said: "GUS intends to vigorously assert its rights and will make a further statement when and if appropriate."

American Business Information, based in Omaha, has made a counter bid of £515m and launched legal action claiming that GUS had knowingly aided and abetted alleged breaches of conduct by Metromail's management.

Analysts said the legal ac-

tion and the prospect of a bid auction could prove distracting for GUS's management as the Argos battle heated up.

But they said the company could still pull off both deals. "Fighting on two fronts isn't ideal but it is a limited distraction," said Nick Bobb of SG Securities. "It might make people think that GUS has got other things to do with its money and so might not raise its bid for Argos. But most people recognise that it could do both."

The court case is due to be held next Friday. The claim alleges that Metromail directors failed to hold a fair auction for the company and so breached their fiduciary duty to shareholders. American Business says it had stated its intention to Metromail to offer more than \$32 per share for the business, subject to due diligence. It was completing that process when Metromail announced

an agreed deal with GUS at \$31.50.

Analysts said GUS could increase its offer to \$35 per share and still not be accused of overpaying. However, some said Lord Wolfson, the GUS chairman was likely to walk away rather than get involved in an auction. He has already admitted that paying £500m for a company that made a loss last year, was a "full price."

The collapse of the deal would be a significant blow to GUS which had seen the business as a key part of its expanding database and information empire in America. It had wanted to put Metromail together with Direct Technology, a business it acquired last year and whose main office is only 10 miles from Metromail's base.

GUS shares fell 2p to 780p on the news. Argos shares rose a penny to 605p against GUS's offer price of 570p.

صلى الله عليه وسلم

Telecoms frenzy boosts BT as Footsie nudges 6,000

MARKET REPORT



PETER THAL LARSEN

WHEN will the phone finally ring in the telecoms sector? Britain's telecom stocks have been stuck in a phoney war ever since British Telecom's proposed marriage with MCI fell apart last autumn after the US long-distance operator decided to jump into bed with rival WorldCom.

Since then, rumours involving every conceivable combination of operators have regularly done the rounds in the City. With spring well and truly sprung, not one of the many mooted offers has actually emerged.

Still, it seems that investors are still all too happy to listen to a good telecoms story. BT itself was at the centre of the frenzy yesterday as finance director Robert Brace told a US conference that the company was "talking to a number of major players" in the US.

Although experienced BT watchers were hardly surprised, a number of investors felt the news was evidence that the

company was about to unveil a major transatlantic connection, and the shares put on 47.5p to hit a new peak of 685p on hefty volume of 17 million.

Although it's no secret that BT is courting a number of US partners, a major constraint is the \$7bn (\$4.2bn) cash lump sum that MCI still has to pay BT as compensation for pulling out of their merger. MCI would dearly love to avoid shelling out, and if BT found another partner its lawyers might have grounds to argue that the payment wasn't necessary.

That argument wasn't enough to scare off the bulls, though, who counter that although BT might not be able to sign a deal there is nothing to stop it from announcing an engagement.

BT's possible partners include AT&T and GTE, which were both being named yesterday in connection with mobile network operators Orange and Vodafone. Both

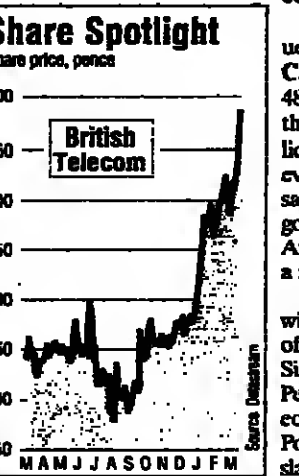
US groups have recently renewed their search for deals in Europe, and a British mobile phone company would fit well in either portfolio. Orange was up 17p to 428p while Vodafone added 35.5p to 617p.

The excitement even extended to Rael, up 23p to 326.5p, with whispers suggesting a bidder may preempt the flotation of its telecoms arm by snapping up the whole of Sir Ernest Harrison's electronics company.

The frenzy came on a day when the FTSE 100 came within a whisker of breaching the 6,000 barrier for the first time. It eventually closed up 94.3 points at 5997.9. Traders pointed to general post-bid optimism and a strong opening from Wall Street as the rise, as well as tomorrow's expiry of the March FTSE futures contract. The suggestion was that the arbitrage might try to score a big profit by pushing the FTSE as high as 6050 tomorrow.

Although these are short-term factors, it seems that the Labour government can do no wrong with the stock market. A cool £17bn was added to the value of shares yesterday, and the market has gained a whopping £300bn since Tony Blair was elected less than a year ago.

Energy Group, stuck in a



two-way bid tussle between rival US utility groups Texas and Pacificorp, was the market's most active stock with over 18 million shares traded. US institutions are believed to be building up stakes in order to take up Energy Group's all-share offer, which is currently worth 865p compared to the 840p cash bid. The shares edged up 0.5p to 840p.

Media stocks also continued their recent rise, with Carlton adding 16.75p to 488.75p and BSkyB up a further 10.5p to 455p. Lord Holford's United News & Media even managed to shrug off the sale of 60,000 shares by outgoing managing director David Arculus. The shares closed at a record 815p, up 15p.

Hopes that a white knight will come riding to the rescue of Blackbird Toys faded after Sir Ron Brierley's Guinness Peat Group, which has mounted a hostile bid for the Polly Pocket to Plasticine company, slammed Bluebird's prospects.

The shares slipped 5.5p to 106p. GPG's offer stands at 101p.

A strong set of annual results boosted Bodycote, the metal processing specialist. Its shares ended the day up 110p at a record high of 1157.5p. Good figures also helped Cobham, the engineering group, up 47p to 978.5p while exhaust and tyre firm Kwik-Fit accelerated 79p to 511p.

Manchester United, once the City's favourite football share, continued its fall from grace after Wednesday's exit from the European Champions League. With Arsenal challenging strongly in the Premiership, fans and shareholders alike are concerned that United could finish the season without any silverware. The shares were booed down 3p to 143p.

Rivals Newcastle United, however, shrugged off a 2-1 defeat by bottom of the league Crystal Palace to put on 3.5p to 47p.

TAKING STOCK

SERVOMEX, making industrial instruments, continued its recovery after recent results turned out less than expected. The shares, up 20p to 322.5p yesterday, touched a new low of 244p just a few weeks ago. House broker Charterhouse Thiney has reshuffled the shareholder base and is planning to issue a buy note today forecasting profits of £3.8m for the current year and £4.7m in 1999, which puts the shares on a forward p/e ratio of five. The broker points out that recent deals have occurred at much higher valuations.

OVER on AIM, tiny fund manager Farlake added 10p to 265p. The shares hit a peak of 475p in 1996 before crashing to a low of 140p earlier this year. Schwco Nominees, whose beneficial owner is Derwent, thought to be linked to property entrepreneur David Rowland, has added 100,000 shares to its holding, giving it a 19.16 per cent stake.

12 week				52 week				12 week				52 week			
High	Low	Stock	Price	High	Low	Stock	Price	High	Low	Stock	Price	High	Low	Stock	Price
Alcoholic Beverages															
199	199	199	199	199	199	199	199	199	199	199	199	199	199	199	199
200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Banking															
210	210	210	210	210	210	210	210	210	210	210	210	210	210	210	210
220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220	220
Food															
230	230	230	230	230	230	230	230	230	230	230	230	230	230	230	230
240	240	240	240	240	240	240	240	240	240	240	240	240	240	240	240
Gas															
250	250	250	250	250	250	250	250	250	250	250	250	250	250	250	250
260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260	260
Health Care															
270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270
280	280	280	280	280	280	280	280	280	280	280	280	280	280	280	280
Household Goods															
290	290	290	290	290	290	290	290	290	290	290	290	290	290	290	290
300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300
Insurance															
310	310	310	310	310	310	310	310	310	310	310	310	310	310	310	310
320	320	320	320	320	320	320	320	320	320	320	320	320	320	320	320
Life Assurance															
330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330
340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340
Media															
350	350	350	350	350	350	350	350	350	350	350	350	350	350	350	350
360	360	360	360	360	360	360	360	360	360	360	360	360	360	360	360
Oil															
370	370	370	370	370	370	370	370	370	370	370	370	370	370	370	370
380	380	380	380	380	380	380	380	380	380	380	380	380	380	380	380
Property															
390	390	390	390	390	390	390	390	390	390	390	390	390	390	390	390
400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400
Real Estate															
410	410	410	410	410	410	410	410	410	410	410	410	410	410	410	410
420	420	420	420	420	420	420	420	420	420	420	420	420	420	420	420
Services															
430	430	430	430	430	430	430	430	430	430	430	430	430	430	430	430
440	440	440	440	440	440	440	440	440	440	440	440	440	440	440	440
Software															
450	450	450	450	450	450	450	450	450	450	450	450	450	450	450	450
460	460	460	460	460	460	460	460	460	460	460	460	460	460	460	460
Telecoms															
470	470	470	470	470	470	470	470	470	470	470	470	470	470	470	470
480	480	480	470	480	480	480	470	480	480	480	470	480	480	470	480
490	490	490	480	490	490	490	480	490	490	490	480	490	490	480	490
Transport															
500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500
510	510	510	510	510	510	510	510	510	510	510	510	510	510	510	510
Utilities															
520	520	520	520	520	520	520	520	520	520	520	520	520	520	520	520
530	530	530	530	530	530	530	530	530	530	530	530	530	530	530	530
Wine															
540	540	540	540	540	540	540	540	540	540	540	540	540	540	540	540
550	550	550	550	550	550	550	550	550	550	550	550	550	550	550	550

House builders voice fear of rate rise threat to recovery in sales

By Andrew Verity

HOUSE BUILDERS and construction companies yesterday reported much-improved profits but warned that higher interest rates could damage the recovery in sales.

Bovis, the British house-builder, saw its profits rise by 60 per cent in its first year as a separately-listed company. But Malcolm Harris, the group's chief executive, warned interest rates must not rise if the market was to continue to expand.

"The reduction in retail sales last month and the very high pound, means that in our view there is no need whatsoever

that interest rates should rise," he said. "In fact we would hope over the next two years they should moderate as we see an alignment of European rates."

Mr Harris said the group nevertheless planned significant expansion in the north of England. It has doubled the size of its land holdings in big northern provincial towns. "The prime areas of the Midlands and the North are showing an element of catching up in terms of price increases," he said.

Bovis now holds a total of 2,200 acres of land, giving it the potential to build over 13,000 homes. Its average home sold for £92,000 in 1997, up slightly from

£90,100 in the previous year. Bovis, which last December was spun off from its former parent, P&O, reported profits of £37.3m, up from £23.2m last year. Shares rose yesterday by 15p to 261.5p.

Amec, the construction and engineering group, reported a rise in profits of 26 per cent to £47.5m, including a doubling of earnings at its house building subsidiary, Fairclough Homes.

Amec said Fairclough had benefited from a buoyant marketplace for property in the South-east where prices for its homes had risen by 24 per cent over 1997. The average price was now £107,000.

Amec's engineering operations saw a return to profitability at its manufacturing operations in Newcastle. It now has £3bn of orders, up by 9 per cent from a year earlier.

Sydney Gilbrand, the chairman of Amec, said prospects for future profit growth for the company were "very good indeed". Market conditions were more favourable than they had been for 10 years.

After being stung by the 1990s property slump, the group has fought hard to reduce its exposure to cyclical swings in the property market. Whereas large-scale building projects made up 85 per cent of its business in

1987, this has now been reduced to 60 per cent.

Travis Perkins, the timber and building materials merchant, said it expected housing sales to be subdued under current market conditions. A strong pound was also keeping down prices for exports.

Reporting pre-tax profits up 25 per cent to £49.6m in the first quarter, Tony Travis, the group's chairman, said: "Although the continuing strength of sterling is putting downward pressure on the average cost price of our products, our like for like sales in the first two months of the current year are 10 per cent ahead of the figure for the same period of 1997."

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

JOHN WILLCOCK



WHEN Andrew Loughurst, once regarded as heir apparent to the top job at Lloyds TSB, quit as a director and chairman of the Cheltenham & Gloucester subsidiary in January, there was much gnashing of teeth in the West Country. Mr Loughurst's job had been "reorganised" out of existence by the Lombard Street establishment, ending his 30 year career with the C&G.

It all seemed very unfair, after the flamboyant Mr Loughurst had built the building society into what many regarded as the most efficient mortgage-making machine in the country. Now Mr Loughurst's successor has been appointed, in the form of John Bays, formerly deputy chairman of the C&G.

Meanwhile Sir Brian Pitman continues to go on and on as chairman of the parent group Lloyds TSB, with Peter Elwood, the former Barclays and TSB high flyer, now well co-sourced as chief executive. We wish Mr Loughurst well.

PETER BIRCH, who retired as chief executive of Abbey National at the end of last month, has been appointed chairman of Trinity International, the UK's largest regional newspaper group. Trinity owns the *Liverpool Echo*, *Belfast Telegraph* and *Western Mail*, as well as 120 other titles.

Mr Birch already has a string of non-executive directorships, including Argos, Dalgety and Land Securities. He spent most of his career as a marketing man with Gillette before cutting a dash in the City. He joined Abbey in 1984 and steered the building society through the very first demutualisation.

The directors at Trinity can relax, though, since they don't need floating. Mr Birch certainly isn't doing the new job out of any need for cash, since he's still sitting on a mountain of Abbey National options, which some say is now worth north of £6m.

Mr Birch replaces David Snedden, who is retiring after 15 years with Trinity and four years as chairman. Mr Snedden said recently that "the temptation to spend more time with my family, consultancy and fishing rod, although not necessarily in that order, is irresistible."

SIR Brian Jenkins, former Lord Mayor of London and ex head of audit at Coopers & Lybrand, was in rollicking form as head of the judging panel at yesterday's prize presentation for this year's Charity Annual Report and Accounts Awards.

Trevor McDonald, the popular ITN newscaster, was the guest of honour at the awards, held at the Institute of Chartered Accountants in the City. The ICA and the Charity Forum co-sponsor the awards.

Sir Brian kicked off the proceedings by telling the assembled audience that "judges get older and accounts get better." He slightly blunted this claim by adding that fully 50 per cent of entrants to the competition had failed at the first hurdle simply because the applicants had failed to either date or sign their entry.

Confusion then reigned as the winners were presented with their prizes of £2,000 each. Sir Brian not realising that the winners were supposed to contribute a few words of their own to the proceedings. When this was pointed out to him, the first prizewinners were invited back on stage to say their piece. Mr McDonald, exhibiting his true professionalism, remained unfazed by the ensuing scenes of chaos.

As the last winners were ushered from the stage, Sir Brian declared: "I think that just about wraps it up. I've had rather an accident-prone afternoon. Is there anything else I should do?"

To which the president of the ICA, Chris Laine, exclaimed: "I think now you should sit down." Which, to Sir Brian's credit, he did.

MICHAEL JACKSON, deputy chairman of Sage, the designer of accounting software, and founding chairman of Elderstreet Downing VCT, a venture capital trust, is a keen tennis player, he tells me.

Mr Jackson set up Elderstreet eight years ago, and its directors now include Luke Johnson, the founder of Pizza Express.

Anyway, Mr Jackson tells me excitedly that he once beat Tim Henman, Britain's great tennis hope. The entrepreneur's victory came at the Rye Tennis Championships in Sussex in 1986. At the time Mr Jackson was 36 and Tim Henman was just 11. Mr Jackson beat the future tennis star 6-4 after a disputed line call. Mr Jackson recalls: "Tim was so small that people looked at me as if I was a child beater."

IT IS appropriate in the week of the Cheltenham Festival that University Diagnostics is launching a DNA database service for horses. University Diagnostics is a division of LGC (until 18 months ago The Laboratory of the Government Chemist). It is offering a service which will enable you to trace your horse if it gets stolen.

The company already has a world beater—a service which sexes parrots. It works in the same way as the horse DNA operation, and is currently helping scores of European zoos in their breeding programmes.

The company tells me that parrots doo' have an external reproductive organs, and you can kill them by "prodding around", so now they take DNA samples from the feathers. The tests cost a mere £22.50 a shot.

Courtaulds Textiles beats profit forecasts

COURTAULDS Textiles, the clothing and fabric company, yesterday set itself a target of beating its historic profit peak of £46m in the coming year. Colin Dyer, the chief executive said: "We aim to beat our historic profit peak, which was around £46m, this year."

His comment came as the company posted a 38 per cent increase in profits before tax and exceptional items of £41.2m in the year to 31 December. The 1997 result exceeded most brokers' forecasts which centred on £40m.

Mr Dyer said: "The French economy is beginning to wake up a bit. Consumer demand is a little stronger there. French market demand for the group's hosiery remained weak in 1997, particularly during the peak autumn selling season, he said.

"We are also seeing a steady-ing of the trading environment in Asia. The environment seems to have calmed. Our order books did not suffer too badly



On show: Colin Dyer, chief executive with models wearing Courtaulds Textiles' latest range. Photograph: Daniel Newman

and we are beginning to see better margins," said Mr Dyer.

The Asia-Pacific region makes up just 5 per cent of group sales, which increased by £6m to £932.3m at constant exchange rates in 1997. About £310m of

the group's turnover came from sales to Marks & Spencer.

The company's lace and stretch fabrics division recovered strongly in 1997 to post pre-exceptional profits of £19.2m, up from £12.9m, helped

by buoyant demand in the United States and Europe.

The group's lingerie and hosiery division saw a slight fall in pre-exceptional profit to £11.4m in 1997. Its casualwear and underwear division lifted

pre-exceptional profit to £14.0m in 1997 from £11.6m in 1996. The company set a return on average capital employed target of 17 per cent to be achieved in the year ending December 1999.

— Reuter

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Sterling	Spot	1 month	3 months	Dollar	Spot	1 month	3 months	D-Mark	Spot
UK	10000				0.9994	0.9993	0.9992	0.9991	0.2275	
Australia	2.581	25.00	25.00		1.5082	1.5086	1.5084	1.5082	0.8247	
Austria	2.4624	21.28	21.28		12.8824	12.8824	12.8824	12.8824	0.8247	
Belgium	62.937	62.724	62.724		37.725	37.725	37.725	37.725	0.2014	
Canada	2.3666	23.67	23.67		1.4986	1.4975	1.4975	1.4975	0.7779	
Denmark	116.32	115.96	115.97		6.9725	6.9694	6.9694	6.9694	0.3889	
ECU	1.5365	1.5323	1.5321		1.0658	1.0671	1.0671	1.0671	0.8965	
France	9.2208	9.2208	9.2208		5.5461	5.5461	5.5461	5.5461	0.3035	
Germany	10.335	10.335	10.335		7.2463	7.2463	7.2463	7.2463	0.3253	
Greece	3.0532	3.0430	3.0235		1.8301	1.8286	1.8205	1.8205	1.0000	
Italy	5.0819	5.0819	5.0819		3.2220	3.2220	3.2220	3.2220	1.7627	
Japan	12.578	12.578	12.578		7.2463	7.2463	7.2463	7.2463	0.3253	
Netherlands	1.3663	1.3663	1.3663		1.3750	1.3750	1.3750	1.3750	0.7953	
New Zealand	1.2539	1.2520	1.2520		1.3750	1.3750	1.3750	1.3750	0.7953	
Portugal	20.480	20.480	20.480		1.3750	1.3750	1.3750	1.3750	0.7953	
Spain	16.636	16.636	16.636		1.3750	1.3750	1.3750	1.3750	0.7953	
Sweden	8.4666	8.4666	8.4666		1.3750	1.3750	1.3750	1.3750	0.7953	
Switzerland	7.4566	7.4566	7.4566		1.3750	1.3750	1.3750	1.3750	0.7953	
Taiwan	3.3750	3.3750	3.3750		1.3750	1.3750	1.3750	1.3750	0.7953	
US	1.5360	1.5360	1.5360		1.3750	1.3750	1.3750	1.3750	0.7953	

Other Spot Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	16.636	10.000	Iran	0.4428	0.3850
Australia	2.581	25.000	Israel	2.0000	0.4000
Canada	2.3666	23.670	Japan	12.578	125.780
Denmark	116.32	115.96	South Korea	24.320	148.300
ECU	1.5365	1.5323	Thailand	67.483	40.450
France	9.2208	9.2208	Turkey	3.3750	20.750
Germany	10.335	10.335	UK	1.0000	1.0000
Greece	3.0532	3.0430			
Italy	5.0819	5.0819			
Japan	12.578	12.578			
Netherlands	1.3663	1.3663			
New Zealand	1.2539	1.2520			
Portugal	20.480	20.480			
Spain	16.636	16.636			
Sweden	8.4666	8.4666			
Switzerland	7.4566	7.4566			
Taiwan	3.3750	3.3750			
US	1.5360	1.5360			

Interest Rates

UK	Germany	US	Japan	5.00%	0.50%
Base	7.25%	Prime	Discount	5.00%	0.50%
Interbank	3.30%	Discount	Prime	5.00%	0.50%
Prime	5.50%	Discount	Prime	5.00%	0.50%
Discount	5.50%	Discount	Prime	5.00%	0.50%
Netherlands	5.50%	Discount	Prime	5.00%	0.50%
Sp/Advance	3.30%	Discount	Prime	5.00%	0.50%

Money Market Rates

	Overnight		1 week		1 month		3 months		6 months		1 year	
Treasury Bills	Bid	Offer	Bid	Offer	Bid	Offer	Bid	Offer	Bid	Offer	Bid	Offer
LIBOR					7.25	7.03	7.25	7.03				
Domestic Deposits	7.25	7.38	7.31	7.44	7.44	7.44	7.44	7.30	7.44	7.50	7.67	7.53
Domestic CDs	7.26	7.30	7.41	7.47	7.41	7.47	7.42	7.47	7.23	7.47	7.47	7.53
Eligible Bank Bills					7.26	7.26	7.27	7.21	7.23	7.23		
Starring CDs					7.43	7.37	7.46	7.40	7.47	7.40	7.46	7.36
Starring CDs					5.50	5.51						
ECU Deposits					4.09	4.22	4.09	4.22	4.09	4.22		

www.bloomberg.com/uk

Source: Bloomberg

Life Financial Futures

Contract	Settlement	High	Low	Est floor	Open
Long GR	Jun-98	10.72	10.72	10.72	10.72
1 Yr GR	Jun-98	10.72	10.72	10.72	10.72
3 Mth GR	Jun-98	10.72	10.72	10.72	10.72
5 Yr GR	Jun-98	10.72	10.72	10.72	10.72
10 Yr GR	Jun-98	10.72	10.72	10.72	10.72

Commodity Indices

Index	Base	Sett	High	Low	31 Dec	Sett
Index	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Base	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Sett	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
High	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Low	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Industrial Metals

Contract	Settlement	High	Low	Est floor	Open
Aluminum	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40
Copper	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40
Gold	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40
Iron	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40
Nickel	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40

Precious Metals

Contract	Settlement	High	Low	Est floor	Open
Gold	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40
Silver	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40
Palladium	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40
Platinum	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40

Agricultural

Contract	Settlement	High	Low	Est floor	Open
Wheat	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40
Corn	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40
Soybeans	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40
Canola	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40

Latest Unit Trust Prices

Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit	Price
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40

Unit Trust Prices

Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit	Price
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40

Unit Trust Prices

Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit	Price
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40

Unit Trust Prices

Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit	Price
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40
ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40	ABN Growth Trust Ltd	1.40

سكنا في الامل

A bitter Business for poor Nicholls

By Greg Wood
at Cheltenham

BEFORE the Gold Cup, Paul Nicholls told an interviewer that in his dreams he had imagined every possible way that the race might unfold for his runner, See More Business, from an easy victory to a fall at the first, that the list included the chaser's eventual fate—carried out at the 12th, when Cyborg broke down and dragged both See More Business and Indian Tracker past the wrong side of the fence.

Indian Tracker, a stablemate of Cyborg at Martin Pipe's Wellington yard, was among the outsiders, but See More Business set off as the second favourite, and the most obvious standard bearer of the British challenge to Doran's Pride.

The stewards inquired into the incident, and decided that Cyborg lost his action as the result of a pelvic injury, giving Tony McCoy, his jockey, no option but to pull out of the race. The officials took no further action.

while Cyborg was taken to the racecourse hospital for examination. It was unclear last night whether he was fit enough to travel back to Pipe's yard.

The injury to Cyborg was a bitter blow for all concerned, but McCoy more than made it up to the punters later in the afternoon. A treble in the last three races of the meeting was completed by victory for Blowing Wind, the hot favourite, in the County Hurdle.

The success earned his connections a £50,000 bonus offered by the sponsors of last Saturday's Imperial Cup to any horse which could win their race and an event at the Festival. Out in the ring, however, the cost was much greater. After a series of bad results for the bookmakers, they had laid Blowing Wind at all prices down to 15-8, knowing that the other 27 entries were running

for them. Salvation appeared to be at hand when Bless Me Sister strode to the front on the turn for home, but Blowing Wind came late to snatch victory and as dusk fell over Cheltenham, long lines of backers were still queuing to be paid.

Another successful punter was Matt Archer, the joint-owner of Upgrade, who started backing his runner for the Triumph Hurdle several weeks ago with a £500 each-way bet at 33-1, added to his stake as the race approached. When Upgrade charged up the hill to repel the persistent challenge of City Hall in yesterday's opening race, Archer collected an estimated £150,000 from his betting alone.

This was a brave performance by Upgrade, who was at the head of affairs throughout but still had enough in reserve to stay on dourly in the closing stages. If his effort has not drained him too severely, he will run in the Glenlivet Hurdle at Aintree next month, with the 1999 Champion Hurdle the long-term target. If Archer wants to play up his winnings,



Andrew Thornton passes all the glory on to his Gold Cup-winning mount, Cool Dawn, yesterday. Photograph: Peter Jay

Ladbrokes offer 25-1 for next year's championship. There were visions of future Festivals too when the Stayers' Hurdle, won by Jenny Pitman's Princess, "He will be chasing next season," the trainer said, "and we may take in the Royal & Sun Alliance Chase before winning the Millennium Gold Cup."

McCoy's treble in the final three races—the first two legs were Eideron Bleu in the Grand Annual Chase and Cyfor Malta in the Calbar—ensured that he finished the meeting as the leading rider, with five winners, three more than any of his rivals could manage. For Andrew Maguire, however, the worst finished in the worst possible

way. Riding at the Festival for the first time in four years, he had drawn a blank before the Grand Annual, in which he took a heavy fall from Zabadi. Maguire sustained a broken collarbone as well as knee and hand injuries, and was taken to Cheltenham General Hospital. A spokeswoman said that Maguire was conscious and stable, but would be detained overnight, and possibly longer. It was a bad day for Maguire all round as his old friend Barton Bank was retired after finishing eighth in the Gold Cup.

The Tote recorded a new record turnover of £7,296,310 for the three days of the Cheltenham Festival, an increase of £445,195 on last year's total.

Golden day for racing's fall guy



KEN JONES

IT isn't that long ago since the word on Andrew Thornton was that he would struggle to stay on board if they glued him to the saddle.

Thornton came off so often—seven times consecutively during one dark period—that he was advised to seek alternative employment. Kim Bailey, the trainer Thornton joined after riding successfully in the north for Arthur Stephenson, more or less fired him.

Thornton's girlfriend, Jill Richardson, shared as much in the anguish of a career that was going nowhere as she did in the joy of his Gold Cup victory yesterday on the 25-1 shot Cool Dawn. A resolute redhead, who spoke while receiving calls of congratulation on her mobile telephone, she set out the hard times to put Thornton's achievement into proper perspective.

"Watching Andrew ride a couple of years ago it wasn't a case of would he fall but when. Soon he had no confidence at all. It was sad because he was riding horses that had no chance of winning or show his ability." Probably, the thought in Thornton's mind then was that he had made a wrong career move.

A rugby footballer of such promise at Barnard Castle, the public school that turned out Rob Andrew and the Underwood brothers, Thornton had the potential to follow them into England's colours. Instead, he chose the rough and tumble of an even harder game and the pain that goes with it.

The painful period with Bailey was a test of his resolution. In one season alone Thornton suffered seven fractures of the collar bone. "He just wouldn't give up," his girlfriend said. "Kim Bailey made it pretty clear that he didn't think Andrew had much of a future but he asked to stay on in the yard." Things took an upward turn for Thornton when he rode a double in Scotland. There was a technical change, too.

The tallest jockey in the weighing room at Cheltenham yesterday, Thornton was advised to lengthen his stirrups. In reply to one of the many calls he received in the unsaddling enclosure, Jill Richardson said: "Yes, the advice paid off."

Riding longer made such a difference to Thornton's balance that his career was transformed. He struck back with 26 winners and won the King George VI Chase at Kempton last Boxing Day on See More Business for Paul Nicholls.

On Wednesday came Thornton's second Festival winner when he brought French Holly home in the Royal and Sun Alliance Chase. At a party to celebrate French Holly's victory Thornton passed on the champagne. "You carry on," he said to friends, "but I've got a big day tomorrow."

Going off at a price long enough to show that not a great deal was expected of it, Cool Dawn would make a mess of general predictions. When they went down to the start on a day of warm sunshine most eyes were on Doran's Pride who was well backed to bring Ireland another victory.

As emphasised by a flood of money for Florida Pearl on Wednesday, short prices don't deter the Irish if they can smell a winner and there was plenty riding on Doran's Pride when the field set out in the Gold Cup. The sight of Indian Tracker and See More Business being taken out of the race by the suddenly lame Cyborg strengthened confidence in Doran's Pride but a mistake three out did for Ireland's principle challenge.

No Irish celebrations this time, no repeat of the wild excitement that greeted Charlie Swan when he returned to the unsaddling enclosure with Istabraq on Tuesday. It made no difference to Thornton. Yet he had stayed in the game, ridden out the bad days and nobody could take this one away from him.

Results

CHELTEHAM

2.00: 1. UPGRADE (C) (Lewinsky) 14-1, 2. City Hall (25-1), 3. Nettle (14-1), 4. Starboard (10-3), 5. 25m (14-1), 6. 1/4m (14-1), 7. 1/2m (14-1), 8. 3/4m (14-1), 9. 1m (14-1), 10. 1 1/4m (14-1), 11. 1 1/2m (14-1), 12. 1 3/4m (14-1), 13. 2m (14-1), 14. 2 1/4m (14-1), 15. 2 1/2m (14-1), 16. 2 3/4m (14-1), 17. 3m (14-1), 18. 3 1/4m (14-1), 19. 3 1/2m (14-1), 20. 3 3/4m (14-1), 21. 4m (14-1), 22. 4 1/4m (14-1), 23. 4 1/2m (14-1), 24. 4 3/4m (14-1), 25. 5m (14-1), 26. 5 1/4m (14-1), 27. 5 1/2m (14-1), 28. 5 3/4m (14-1), 29. 6m (14-1), 30. 6 1/4m (14-1), 31. 6 1/2m (14-1), 32. 6 3/4m (14-1), 33. 7m (14-1), 34. 7 1/4m (14-1), 35. 7 1/2m (14-1), 36. 7 3/4m (14-1), 37. 8m (14-1), 38. 8 1/4m (14-1), 39. 8 1/2m (14-1), 40. 8 3/4m (14-1), 41. 9m (14-1), 42. 9 1/4m (14-1), 43. 9 1/2m (14-1), 44. 9 3/4m (14-1), 45. 10m (14-1), 46. 10 1/4m (14-1), 47. 10 1/2m (14-1), 48. 10 3/4m (14-1), 49. 11m (14-1), 50. 11 1/4m (14-1), 51. 11 1/2m (14-1), 52. 11 3/4m (14-1), 53. 12m (14-1), 54. 12 1/4m (14-1), 55. 12 1/2m (14-1), 56. 12 3/4m (14-1), 57. 13m (14-1), 58. 13 1/4m (14-1), 59. 13 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Veteran Burnell bundled into Scots' front row

Rugby Union

By Chris Hewett

WHEN Paul Burnell hopped aboard the first available flight from London to Edinburgh yesterday, he found himself so comprehensively outnumbered by 22 England players with Calcutta Cup glory on their minds that he must have felt like parachuting back off again. When he renews his acquaintance with the Red Rose army on Sunday, the odds will be more in his favour; man against man, 15 against 15.

Burnell, a Test Lion five years ago but, at 33, deep into

rugby middle age, was called into the Scotland front row yesterday when Mattie Stewart, the first-choice tight head from Northampton, withdrew with shoulder trouble. He leapfrogged several higher-ranked contenders, including George Graham of Newcastle, who remains on the bench, a victim of his own versatility.

"We were looking for an out-and-out tight-head prop," explained the Scottish team manager, Arthur Hastings. "Most of the other players were merely loose-heads capable of moving across to the other side of the scrum." A brave man, Hastings.

Some of Scotland's more formidable No 1s - Ian McLauchlan, Jim Aitken and David Sole to name but three - will be less than amused at being described as "mere" anything.

Jim Telfer, the national coach, pointed to Burnell's Test experience as the deciding factor and there is no doubt that the London Scottish captain has served his time in the trenches. First capped against England at Twickenham in 1989, he featured in six consecutive Five Nations' Championships and two World Cups before making the last of his 41 appearances against Western Samoa in 1995.

And if 30 months is a long sabbatical from international

rugby, it has nothing on the six years separating Dean Ryan's last England cap from Sunday's trial set to be at Murrayfield. Indeed, if Burnell makes a decent fist of this one, he may yet approach the record 50 caps collected by Sandy Carmichael between 1967 and 1978.

However, the front row is an area of obvious weakness for the Scots and they could have done without a reshuffle at this late stage. Burnell will have to introduce himself to his hooker, the West of Scotland captain Gordon Bulloch, and while the latter stages of his Test career overlapped with that of his fellow prop, Dave Hilton, they

started only the Western Samoa match as the first-choice pairing.

There was less joyful news for another member of Scotland's veteran brigade yesterday. Ian Smith, the former Gloucester open-side flanker now plying an antumnal trade at Moseley, was ruled out of this summer's tour of Australia because of troublesome knee ligaments - his first serious injury in 15 years of top-flight activity. Smith had already dropped off the bench for the Calcutta Cup match and will undergo surgery today to repair his left knee.

Meanwhile, the chief executive of the Scottish Rugby Union, Bill Watson, had more

complex, if less painful, problems to negotiate. The SRU was taken to task by Donald Gorrie, the Liberal Democrat MP for Edinburgh West, for succumbing to television pressure and shifting the big game to a Sunday for the first time in its 127-year history.

Indeed, the honourable member went so far as to introduce an Early Day Motion "regretting" the move, thereby leaving Watson no choice but to use similar language in defence of his august organisation. "It is regrettable that an MP should introduce a motion that is factually incorrect," he fumed. "It is also regrettable that other

parliamentarians should put their signatures to it without contacting the SRU to verify the fact that we had no choice but to hold the match on the day requested by the BBC, who hold the broadcasting rights.

"They have the right within their contract with the Five Nations Committee to specify both the days on which matches should be played and the kick-off times. However, because of spectators' travelling arrangements and other practical considerations, we would prefer all Five Nations matches to be played on a Saturday and will continue to make that view clearly to the BBC."

The lower orders set to attack status quo

Chris Hewett sees surprises ahead for the home nations in the qualifying series for the World Cup

IT WOULD be stretching a point to suggest that Taiwan's 34-29 victory over Sri Lanka in an absolute humdinger of an Asia Round B tie in downtown Bangkok will send the book-makers rushing to revise their ante-post odds for next year's World Cup. The All Blacks are unlikely to lose much sleep worrying about the Asian threat; back in 1995, the Japanese took the game to New Zealand for the best part of 20 seconds before succumbing 145-17.

All the same, the Taiwan result - and a few dozen others like it - has given shape and substance to a tournament finally ready to leave the backwaters and take its place in the sporting mainstream. By the end of May, we will know the precise make-up of the final qualifying rounds - rounds that will involve England, Scotland, Ireland, Italy, Argentina and the major powers of the South Sea islands. Oh, and Australia, too. The 1991 world champions also have to prove themselves worthy of a seat at the top table.

England must play two qualifiers this autumn and as things stand, they will be against the Netherlands and, rather more demanding, Romania. (The Ukraine may yet have something to say about that assumption, but their 35-13 defeat in Amsterdam last November left them looking more like Chicken Kiev than Dynamo Kiev.) The Scots, meanwhile, can expect to face two from Spain, Portugal and, er, Germany, who currently stand joint top of Europe Round B Pool 3, if that makes any sense at all.

Any dyed-in-the-wool rugger-bugger traditionalists inclined to poke fun at the lower end of the world order - to mock Guyana's inability to field a side against Brazil, to giggle uncontrollably at Bulgaria's 89-0 hammering by Latvia, to find about laughing at the very thought of Andorra winning an entire qualifying pool - will wake up with a start when they realise the seriousness of forthcoming events. Especially if they happen to be Irish, who will almost certainly cop Italy in one of their autumn qualifying matches, or Australian. The Wallabies are about to risk life and limb in a three-match collision with Western Samoa, Fiji and Tonga. The very best of British to them.

Only four countries have pre-qualified for the finals proper: the top three from 1995 - South Africa, New Zealand and France - plus Wales as hosts. Provided England avoid being turned over by the Dutch, they will be based on home soil in a group already including the All Blacks. The Romanians will probably join them along with a rank outsider from a newly instigated and mind-blowingly complicated repêchage arrangement.

South Africa will be based in Scotland and despite a likely Murrayfield collision with the Scots themselves, they appear to have secured the most comfortable ride into the last eight. The remaining groups are far more competitive: France will probably face Western Samoa and Canada, Ireland can expect to come up against both Australia and the fast-improving Italians, while Wales may well have to pick a route past Argentina and one of the South Sea big-brothers - something they famously failed to achieve the last time they undertook World Cup business on home turf.

Just to make it harder for the home nations, none of whom will start as clear favourites to win their group, the organisers have inserted a nasty little play-off round before the quarter-finals; a move that could see easily see England and the Scots thrown together in a desperate confrontation that would make this weekend's Calcutta Cup match look like a vicarage whist drive. Still, they should worry. Poor old Tahiti lost 92-6 to Papua New Guinea in their most recent World Cup tie. Presumably, the coach is on borrowed time.

Supermen myth is laid bare by United's failings

SOMETHING was gained in the translation. When the Monaco president, Jean-Louis Campora, reflected on reaching the semi-finals of the European Cup he said: "Tonight we beat a myth of football. Manchester United are a myth."

Campora's happy, smiling demeanour and his politician's hedging - his day job is the equivalent of Prime Minister of the principality - suggested he had intended to be more diplomatic. Legend was what he meant although, unwittingly, he may have stumbled upon a half-truth. United's supposed invincibility had been built on myth.

Not so long ago it was a popular assertion: Manchester United were the best team in Europe. Forget the fact they had yet to win the trophy to confirm the premise, it was the thing that managers clung to when their charges were being walloped. What can we do when we're playing supermen?

The last two months have laid bare the hollowness of those beliefs. Maybe United, when they have all their players at their disposal, are a match for anyone in the continent. Even then it is only a maybe. The proof is in the beating.

Since United were serenely leading their supposed closest challengers, Chelsea, 5-0 during what seemed to be the season's defining moment on 4 January, the form of the champions has been little above relegation fodder. They have gone out of the European Cup and FA Cup, while in the Premiership they have scored nine goals and gained 14 points out of a potential 30.

The table which appeared to be about to heave with glittering prizes has been left nearly bare and even the domestic championship, which everyone assumed was theirs for the taking, has gone from being a formality to a task



Alex Ferguson needs to buy quality players if his ambition to dominate Europe is to be fulfilled, says Guy Hodgson

fraught with difficulties. Old Trafford is coming to terms with a disagreeable truth: United might not win anything this season.

"Now, winning the Premiership has become even more important than it was before," Peter Schmeichel said amid the debris of the dreams of European supremacy. "With all the international players we have it does not bear thinking about that we might not be in the Champions' League next season."

All the players. That is where people on the outside with the club's interests at heart differ from those within. On Wednesday night Phil Neville said that no team in Europe could easily shrug off long-term injuries to Schmeichel, Gary Pallister, Roy Keane and Ryan Giggs, not to mention the debilitating niggles that have struck Paul Scholes and Gary Neville. Agreed. Where others might demur is over the quality of the replacements.

On Wednesday when United were looking for a match-winner to unlock a Monaco defence that was tiring, who did Alex Ferguson have at his disposal? From a look at the substitutes' bench either the spent force that is Brian McClair or the unproven one that is Ben Thornley. Pertinently, the manager chose to ignore both of them.

Without the headword, never mind the rapier, he had to resort to the bludgeon in the shape of Henning Berg, who was sent forward like some ageing battleship to be embarrassed by swifter, more skilful opponents. Lower division clubs

do things like that in search of a sucker punch in FA Cup matches - but future European champions?

Afterwards, Ferguson, the disappointment cutting deep lines in his florid features, mumbled about not getting he breaks you need in Europe and in a sense he was right. United should have had a penalty when Martin Djetou jumped with his arms raised at Teddy Sheringham's overhead cross and the hugely impressive David Beckham might have contrived something spectacular, but the stark truth over two legs was that Monaco were the better team.

You make your own breaks, and Ferguson's inability to strengthen his squad even as it began to succumb to injury has been the principal reason why they did not. It seemed good business when Karel Poborsky was sold to Benfica, but the disinclination to buy a replacement was not.

The Czech winger might not have been quite good enough for the United first team, but he would still have been better than Thornley, whose early promise refuses to blossom. Now, without Giggs, there is no one with the speed on the flanks to turn

defenders and force crosses from uncomfortable positions.

Perhaps if there were, the attack would begin to inspire fear again. Andy Cole had a good game against Monaco, but did not get a sniff of a chance while the assertions that Sheringham is the ideal replacement for Eric

Cantona are becoming more fanciful by the week. A good link player he might be, but the England striker has a diminishing ability to turn games and, no matter the shortcomings of Cantona in Europe, he was peerless as a scorer of point-winning goals in the Premiership.



Exposed: United's Denis Irwin, Michael Clegg and Nicky Butt troop out of the European Cup

Photograph: Epics

NEW YEAR IRRESOLUTION: UNITED'S RECORD IN '98

January	February	March
4 Chelsea 3 Man Utd 5 (FA Cup)	7 Man Utd 1 Bolton Wanderers 1 (L)	4 Middlesbrough 0 Man Utd 0 (European Cup)
10 Man Utd 2 Tottenham 0 (League)	15 Man Utd 1 Barnsley 1 (FAC)	7 Sheffield Wed 2 Man Utd 0 (L)
19 Southampton 1 Man Utd 0 (L)	18 Aston Villa 0 Man Utd 2 (L)	11 Man Utd 1 West Ham 1 (L)
24 Man Utd 5 Watford 1 (FAC)	21 Man Utd 2 Derby County 0 (L)	14 Man Utd 0 Arsenal 1 (L)
31 Man Utd 0 Leicester City 1 (L)	28 Chelsea 0 Man Utd 1 (L)	18 Man Utd 1 Middlesbrough 1 (EC)

(United loss on every goal)

Scots' TV boost

By Alan Nixon

SCOTTISH football fans are in for a culture shock next season, with up to 30 top-flight games being played on a Thursday night. The "breakaway" clubs are negotiating a £20m two-year television deal with Sky Sports that will be revealed shortly.

However, there is a large price to pay for the revenue being distributed by the satellite company, with the vast majority of the matches being put on at an unfamiliar time.

There are already objections within the new Premier League about the proposed switch, with Celtic particularly unhappy at losing so many Saturday games. The TV deal will guarantee 30 live broadcasts,

with 24 to involve the Old Firm of Celtic and Rangers. That will mean huge disruption of the fixture calendar and is bound to cause uproar among supporters, with both Rangers and Celtic drawing many fans from all over Scotland and beyond.

The TV contract is worth £10m a year, split among the 10 clubs. Rangers and Celtic will pocket around £1.5m each, while the smaller clubs can expect at least £500,000 during the season - money which will help keep some of those teams with less support afloat.

Celtic will host the Old Firm Scottish Cup semi-final against Rangers, following a drawing of lots yesterday.

TENNIS'S SCOTTISH CUP Semi-final: Sat 4 April: Fife v Hearts (12.30) and Dundee v St Johnstone (1.30) at Dundee.

League football at Stevenage?

Non-League notebook

By Rupert Metcalf

STEVENAGE BOROUGH lost their last chance of honours this season when they were surprisingly beaten at home by Slough Town in the quarter-finals of the FA Vauxhall Trophy last weekend. Despite gaining some revenge with a 4-2 win over Slough on Monday, the Hertfordshire side languish in the bottom half of the GM Vauxhall Conference - but their Broadhall Way stadium may yet play host to Nationwide League football next season.

Victor Green, the Stevenage chairman, confirmed yesterday that his club are engaged in talks about a ground-sharing

agreement with Barnet. "We can offer Barnet what they don't have: a stadium fit for the Football League," he said.

The Third Division club have fewer than the Football League minimum of 6,000 seats at their Underhill ground. The deadline for rectifying that situation is August this year and, with a proposed new development at Copthall stadium being delayed by planning problems, Barnet must look elsewhere. They had previously been linked with a temporary move to Enfield or Boreham Wood.

One of the matches of the Conference season will take place at The Shay tomorrow, when the leaders, Halifax Town, take on second-placed Rushden & Diamonds. Tuesday's em-

phatic 5-1 home win over Morecambe took the West Yorkshire side 10 points clear of their rivals from Northamptonshire, who have a game in hand.

Ongoing building work at The Shay means that tomorrow's match is all-ticket, with a 3,500 crowd limit. Halifax are confident that the construction of new terraces at both ends of the stadium will be complete by the Football League's ground-grading deadline of 1 April. The eventual capacity, after the town's rugby league team have moved in, will be 15,000.

Rushden have risen rapidly up the table with four consecutive wins - and another three points for the Diamonds tomorrow will keep the championship race very much alive.

Emerson arrives

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY are to sign the former Benfica centre-back Emerson Thome until the end of the season. The 25-year-old has been on trial at Hillsborough and has played once for the reserves. No transfer fee is involved and the player does not need a work permit.

Reading yesterday moved swiftly to appoint Alan Pardew as their caretaker manager. The former Crystal Palace and Charlton player will take charge for tomorrow's match against Huddersfield. Terry Bullivant resigned as manager on Wednesday after nine defeats in 10 matches left the Royals second from bottom of the First Division.

The Walsall manager, Jan Sorensen, wants to join the

consortium which is poised to make a bid for control of the Second Division club. The decision of Jeff Bonser to resign as chairman this week and put his majority shareholding in the club and Bescot Stadium up for sale has left the Saddlers facing a potentially worrying future.

The midfielder Jamie Pollock joined Manchester City from Bolton Wanderers yesterday on a three-year contract in a £1m deal. However, City's manager, Joe Royle, has been thwarted in a move for the West Bromwich Albion striker Andy Hunt, who is injured.

The winger Martin Phillips, once rated a £10m prospect by Alan Ball, has returned to Exeter on loan from Manchester City.

Senior suspended for Sheffield's semi-final

Rugby League

By Dave Hadfield

KEITH SENIOR, the Sheffield Eagles' centre, will miss his side's Silk Cut Challenge Cup semi-final after being suspended for four games for his left hook on Barrie-Jon Mather in the last round.

Senior, twice capped by Great Britain, was given the ban

after he admitted striking Mather during the victory over Castleford last Saturday. His sentence means that he will be available for the Wembley final if Sheffield beat Salford next weekend, but he is appealing today against the length of his ban.

The League's acting chief executive, Neil Tunnick-Clegg, said that the choice of Watford for its first major rugby league match was a strategic one.

The Rugby League is to install a regional development officer in nearby Bedford and sees Watford as well placed for the Rugby League Conference, which is based in the South and Midlands.

Hemel Hempstead yesterday formally applied for League membership, the first amateur club to respond to an invitation to put forward their case for elevation to the Second Division.

Edwards feared for crew trapped below deck by fallen mast

Sailing

By Stuart Alexander

THE CRIPPLED catamaran Royal & Sun Alliance was heading slowly for Chile yesterday as the boat's skipper, Tracy Edwards, explained why a distress signal had been activated when the boat broke her mast in the Southern Ocean on Wednesday. "Not only were we faced with

the mess of a crumpled mast and all its accompanying rigging, there were several crew members trapped in the port hull," Edwards said yesterday. "It was extremely frightening for the girls below while we tried to move the debris and release them."

The beacon alerted rescue services, but they were not needed and the 92ft catamaran, which had been trying to beat the non-stop round the world

record of 71 days 14 hours, has set up a jury rig and small sail on the remaining 30ft of the 102ft mast.

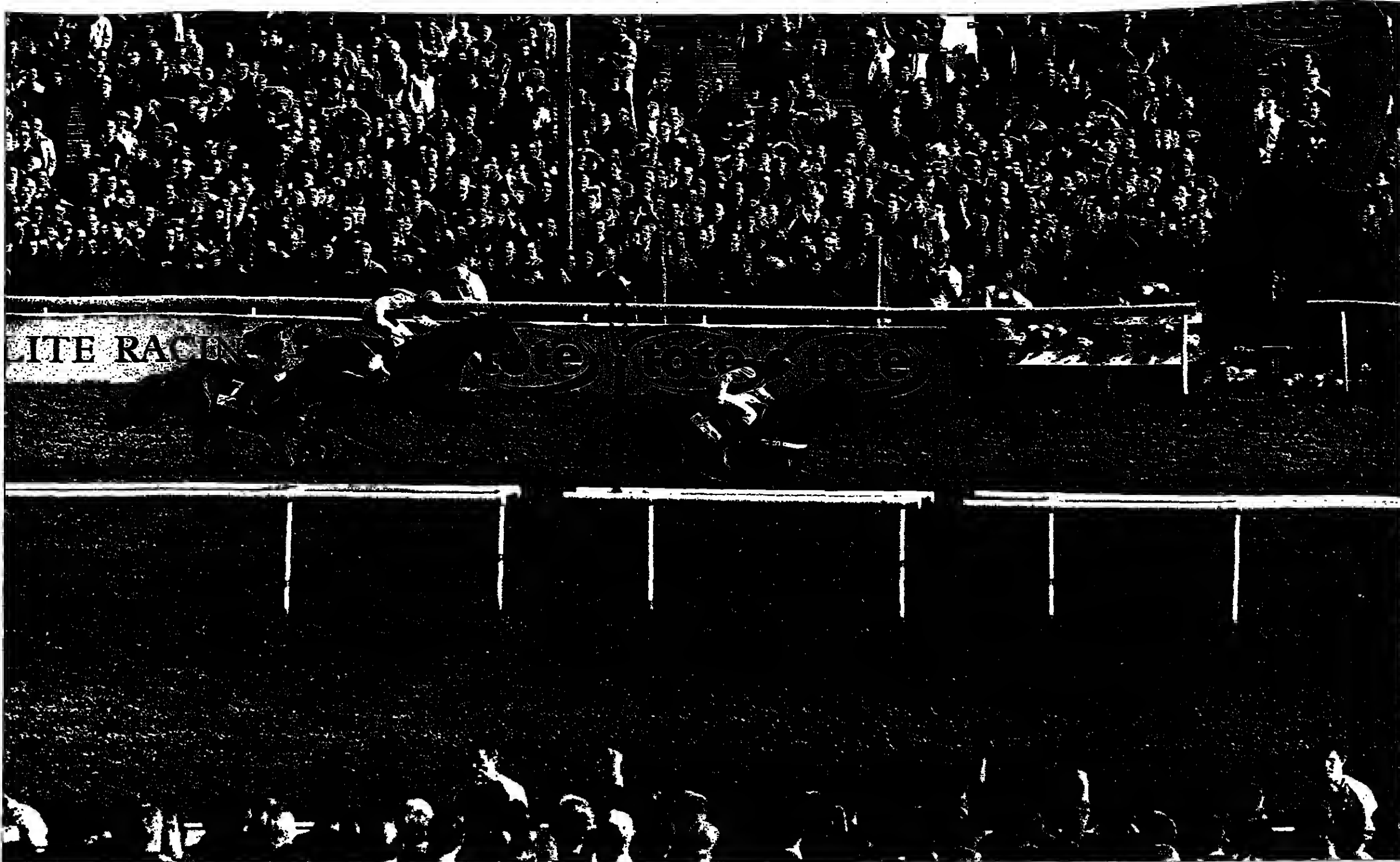
That was enough for a speed of nine knots as Edwards and her 11-strong, all-woman crew decide which port to make for on the coast of Chile, 2000 miles away.

The war of nerves in the sixth leg of the Whitbread Round the World Race from Brazil to Fort Lauderdale in Florida height-

ened yesterday. Britain's Lawrie Smith, in Silk Cut, was hanging on to a 17-mile lead in stifling conditions as the nine-boat fleet headed north to the Equator.

WHITBREAD ROUND THE WORLD RACE (each leg 4,750 miles, Sea Shepherd, Ben to Fort Lauderdale, US): 1 Silk Cut (GB) L (Morocco) G Dalton +172 miles behind; 2 Invicta (Netherlands) K Frost +175; 3 EP Langue (Spain) J Coward +177; 4 Volvo (US) P Sandhu +182; 5 Volvo (US) P Sandhu +182; 6 Volvo (US) P Sandhu +182; 7 Volvo (US) P Sandhu +182; 8 Volvo (US) P Sandhu +182; 9 Volvo (US) P Sandhu +182.

صلى الله عليه وسلم



Against all odds: Andrew Thornton and Cool Dawn strike gold as they race past the post first at Cheltenham yesterday with Strong Promise, in second, and the favourite, Dorans Pride, left trailing in the gelding's wake Photograph: Peter Jay

Cheltenham awakes to a Dawn raid

Racing

By Richard Edmondson
at Cheltenham

A HORSE bought to be a nice ladies' runaround won the Cheltenham Gold Cup yesterday. Cool Dawn, who was purchased as little more than an equine sofa for his owner, Dido Harding, proved himself in the fiercest crucible of National Hunt's blue riband.

As a rider of Cool Dawn, Dido is now an extinct species. The 10-year-old's new partner is Andrew Thornton, though his owner has not yet extinguished the thought of reclaiming the mount. "I live in hope that one day I will get to ride a Gold Cup winner in a race," she said yesterday.

"I got him about five years ago when I asked Robert [Al-

ner, yesterday's winning trainer] to find me a nice, safe ladies' point-to-pointer that might one day win a hunter-chase. He's a bit off-brief I suppose but I'm not complaining.

"We never expected him to be this good and even this morning we were saying that if he does his best and gets round we would really be delighted." Others had similar assessments of Cool Dawn's ability. He was allowed to go off at 25-1.

The gelding had not been the most prepossessing figure in a Cheltenham parade ring bathed in unusual Festival warmth. That honour belonged to the huge and intimidating horse that was to cause him the most discomfort, Strong Promise.

Alner had decided not to cloud Thornton's mind with any complex riding instructions. He didn't give him any at all.

The jockey himself developed just a single strategy. He was to lead from start to finish. Thus, Cool Dawn towed the field along until the definitive moment of the race on the approach to the 12th fence.

It was here that the injured Cyborg swerved off the course, taking out of the race both staminate Indian Tracker and the greatest hope of Britain, See More Business. It took plenty of meaning away from the contest.

The mêlée went unseen, however, by Thornton. At the top of the hill his mind wandered momentarily to think about his beloved grandmother who died last year. Then he just put his head down and rode like stink.

It seemed this would not be enough, however, when the massive spectre of Strong Promise joined the leader on the

TOTE GOLD CUP

1. COOL DAWN (trained by R Alner)
2. Strong Promise (G Hubbard)
3. Dorans Pride (M Hourigan)
Also ran: 4th Senior El Dabulsi (33-1), 5th Sunny Bay (9-1), 6th Simply Dashing (33-1), 7th Challenger du Lac (23-1), 8th Barton Bank (33-1), 9th Strath Royal (20-1), 10th Yorkshire Oaks (10-1), 11th Co Balleis (2-1).
Cautelites - Pulled Up: Addington Boy (before 4 fences out) (2-1), Cockshot Be Better (before last fence) (33-1), Cyborg (before 7th fence) (10-1), Carried Out: Indian Tracker (before 7th) (50-1), See More Business (before 7th) (11-2), Fell: Rough Quest (7th) (14-4).
17 min. won by 1 1/4 lengths, head, 14, 3, 4.

turn into the straight. Dorans Pride, the favourite from Ireland, had been creeping closer too, but he was never to get out of creeping gear.

Cool Dawn was to be no ice sculpture in the Cheltenham heat, though. He kept boxing to the line, and by the time he reached it he was a length and three-quarters ahead of Strong Promise. Dorans Pride finished well to be a further head behind.

For anyone who had seen Cool Dawn at Wincanton in November this would have been an eye-rubbing moment. That day, in the hands of Dido, he, in her words, "ran like a drain". Robert Alner steered himself to tell the owner she should not ride the horse again. "It was the hardest thing I had to do," he said. "I knew the horse was pretty good, and Dido's good in her own right, but not at this level."

"That was Thornton's call. It seemed most apt that a rider who had been once relegated himself should take the posting.

Andrew Thornton was a promising, if unglamorous, young rider in his native North-east. He is a tall man and rides with his stirrups so long that he could probably kick rabbits from horseback. This technique, he found, was not de rigueur when he moved to Upper Lambourn and Kim Bailey. He pulled "the pedals" up and his fortunes started going the other way.

"Riding too short just didn't work for me," he said. "I was just trying to fit in with the stylish way they did it down south. Basically I just wasn't being myself. I was just being stupid and I needed my head looking at."

One day, in November 1994, he knew the game was up. "I

dropped off this horse," he said. "He was in front but I just fell off him." By then the alliance with Bailey had ended, but at least Thornton decided to return to his natural style.

The simple approach has yielded great results this year. Thornton, at 25, won a King George VI Chase on Boxing Day (ironically on See More Business) and ignited his Festival on Wednesday with French Holly's victory.

Success will not go to Andrew Thornton's head though. Like Cool Dawn himself, there

is no ostentation about the athlete and he will continue to tread the path that has resurrected his career. "I'll be still going to the Hexhams and Pertins and Sedgfields," he said.

There is little pomp either about Alner. He will again be at the horsebox wheel this morning as he drives to the rather more prosaic Folkestone. He'll see Thornton there. It was all a rather appropriate, if unexpected, result in the end. The field had paraded before the race to the melody of "Fanfare For The Common Man".

If you like the sound of the South of France you'll love the taste.

A faraway look comes into people's eyes when mention is made of the South of France. For most, it is the capital of chic: a sun-kissed playground of exclusive resorts and spectacular scenery studded with ancient vineyards - among them, La Motte, La Boulandière and Les Garrigues de Truilhas, where James Herrick makes the definitive Midi Chardonnay. Rich, stylish and full of taste; fresh, yet fruity and long-finishing. And amazing, inexpensive. Why settle for ordinary when you can afford the glorious South?

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No. 3563, Friday 20 March By Moss Thursday's solution

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
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ACROSS

- Devours ribs (6)
- It's impertinent (out of order and line) in a girl (8)
- Photographer's aid, snapping tree by lake during trip (10)
- Tied man one released (4)
- Chap, one working to squeeze North's contract (8)
- Girl's cooler at first in the country (6)
- Prize song, not second (4)
- Female, following note, in consequence snarled (8)
- Finest Ming? On reflection it's not China (3-5)
- Grey's slow (4)
- Feed, swigging measure of rough wallop (6)
- A little Eastern book about a parrot (4-4)
- Wretch facing Bishop check (4)
- Dead dry and heated, maybe (10)
- Produce rare results? Good in a loser... (8)
- ... (one with every incentive to beat another) (6)
- Small group with old instrument (5)
- One you might associate with trolls? (9)
- Most of the fruit's fit for a king (6)
- Produce deed affecting completion? (2,2,3,5,3)
- Beast mounted on a crest in a crypt (8)
- Left port with full cargo (5)
- Plant becomes rank weed in time (9)
- A stretch on new track's thrown up change of tune (5-4)
- Place for decanters a party exhausted, we hear? (9)
- Turned up accompanied (8)
- Fences put up to keep little Edward in (6)
- Unhappy sacrificing Spade in card game (5)
- Plants, non-British species (5)

Ferguson heats up hunt for Huckerby

Football

By Alan Nixon

ALEX FERGUSON, the Manchester United manager, is trying to bring Coventry City's coveted forward, Darren Huckerby, to Old Trafford in a £5m deal before the transfer deadline.

Huckerby is top of injury-hit United's wanted list to help their sagging attempt to retain the League title, and next Thursday is the transfer deadline. Ferguson has been given cash to spend by his chief executive, Martin Edwards, and the multi-talented attacker is the player he wants to add much-needed life to his forward line.

Huckerby destroyed United this season with his pace and unpredictable skills and Ferguson could do with his bubbling enthusiasm for the closing weeks of the campaign.

The former Newcastle United reserve can play down either wing or down the middle and is the kind of talent United lacked as they slipped out of Europe.

Huckerby would be a one-man forward line for Ferguson,

who has doubts over Paul Scholes and Ryan Giggs as he tries to beat off Arsenal for the championship.

The problem will be persuading the Coventry manager, Gordon Strachan, to sell. An earlier approach was rejected, but now Ferguson has to get his man. United have been in contact with Coventry who may be forced to move out Huckerby or Dion Dublin after their surprise FA Cup defeat by Sheffield United.

Rumours were rife that Huckerby was in Manchester yesterday discussing terms, but reliable Coventry sources revealed that he was at training in the Midlands. However, a deal could be done in the next week.

Huckerby would certainly be interested in the glamour move if Coventry agree a price.

Coventry will want to tie down Dublin, a target for Blackburn, on a long-term contract before selling Huckerby. They could not risk losing both.

Strachan has spent heavily on his club's record buy Viorel Moldovan and needs to recoup some cash. He also has a surplus of forwards.

Gascoigne calls off £3m Boro transfer

PAUL GASCOIGNE has refused to leave Rangers to join Middlesbrough in a £3m transfer, writes Alan Nixon. The England midfielder has personally called off a deal to team up with Bryan Robson because he wants to see out the season in Scotland.

Gascoigne's snub to Boro will exasperate the Rangers chairman, David Murray, who set up the transfer a week after preparing a similar move to Crystal Palace. Murray is believed to be the driving force behind his departure, but the fans and the manager, Walter Smith, are happy for Gascoigne to stay for the rest of the season.

After lengthy talks with friends and Rangers staff yesterday, Gascoigne decided he would finish the campaign at Ibrox and told his agent, Mel Stein, to call off the transfer after both clubs announced they had agreed a price.

Now Gascoigne wants to get back into the Rangers team and help their fading hopes of winning a 10th successive title and the Scottish Cup as well as recovering his fitness and international place with England.

Myth of Ferguson's supermen, page 30

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